

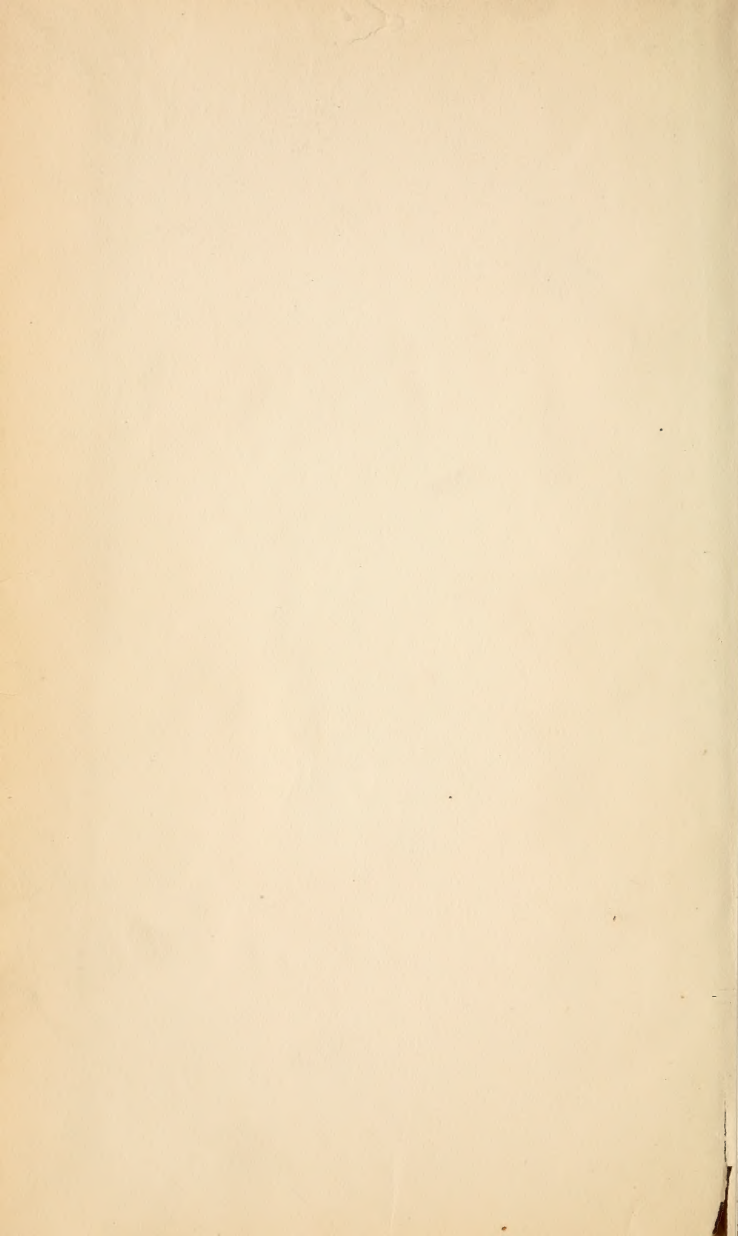
NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



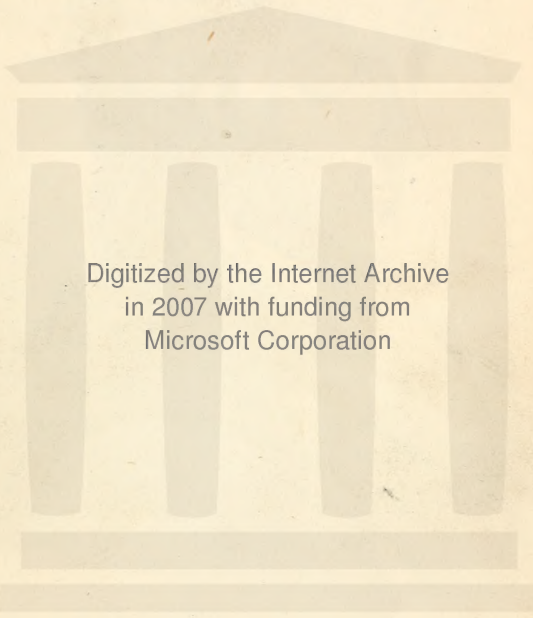
3 3433 08254436 6











Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



ALFIERI,

FROM AN ORIGINAL MINIATURE OF THE POET IN THE POSSESSION OF

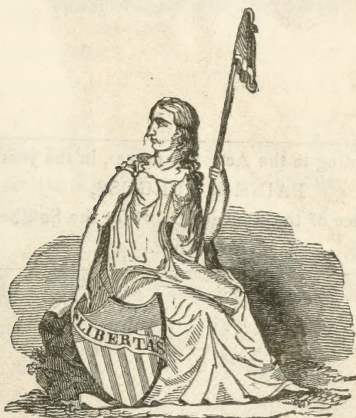
C. EDWARDS LESTER, Esq.,

U. S. CONSUL AT GENOA

132  
ASTOR LIBRARY  
N.Y.

THE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
VITTORIO ALFIERI,  
THE TRAGIC POET.

BORN at ASTI, 1749—DIED at FLORENCE, 1833.



"Who would be free himself must strike the blow."

TRANSLATED, WITH AN ORIGINAL ESSAY ON THE GENIUS AND  
TIMES OF ALFIERI,

BY

C. EDWARDS LESTER,

U. S. CONSUL, AT GENOA—HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ATENEO  
ITALIANO AT FLORENCE—TRANSLATOR OF THE FLORENTINE  
HISTORIES—THE CITIZEN OF A REPUBLIC—ETC.

Second Edition.

NEW YORK:

PAINE AND BURGESS, 62 JOHN STREET.

1845  
m. 12.5

---

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1845, by  
PAINE & BURGESS,  
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of  
New York.

---

---

S. W. BENEDICT, Stereotyper and Printer,  
No. 16 Spruce street, New York.



TO

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS,

THE NOVELIST AND HISTORIAN.

---

DEAR SIR,—As one of our few Authors, who find abundant scope for their genius in the broad fields of American History and American soil—as one of the few who live and labor for “that better day,” when the servile yoke of British Criticism, under which we have so long bowed, shall be broken, I desire to offer you the thanks of one of your countrymen.

*You* never sighed out your sentimentalism over our want of an Independent National Literature. You went to work, and did your best towards creating it. Would to God your example had been universally followed—we should then have heard no more stupid disquisitions upon the *impossibility* of our ever having a National Literature, from men who employ their best wits in seeing we never do. But if I am not beguiled by the dream of hope, the time has come, when our “Literary Colonies” will issue a Declaration of Inde-

pendence, and establish a Republic in Letters, no less powerful than the men of '76 founded and afterwards introduced at the Council Board of Nations. *Thought* has always been free, even under despotisms. More burning is the shame, that we, who boast of our political independence, still drag the chain of British criticism. Who will deny it, when our writers dread the British Journalists more than our own, and the vulgarity of a Trollope, and the puerile carping of a Dickens, cut us to the quick?

Our Statesmen of the Revolution broke away from the political systems of the Old World, and established one of their own: they made good their Declaration by a system of warfare Alexander and Cæsar would have laughed at. Our Artists have abandoned the schools, and the precedents of ages, and are leading the way to brighter and higher fields of Art. Our Authors, too, are beginning to turn aside from stereotyped formulas, and leap the deep channels where thought has been forced for ages to flow; and a single generation will not pass before they will have severed the last link in the foul chain that has bound us. This is the spirit that has *already* given us a National Literature, and when an American Congress can be got together, who consider Bancroft's History, and Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, worth as much as the filthy dreams of Eugene Sue and Paul de Kock, then it will become an object for Americans to write such books. In a word,

when the fruits of the toil of the *Thinker* are guarded from piratical invasion with the same vigilance the toil of the *digger* is guarded, the work will be done.

In the Autobiography of Alfieri, which I offer to you, you have the life of a man, who would be free; one whose great heart throbbed for his poor Italy; one who felt as the earnest men felt, who made her "twice queen of the world." His writings have done more towards awakening a lofty, national spirit, in that fallen, desolate garden of the earth, than all others for a century. It is a strange book. In it the great Tragedian has revealed all the secrets of his soul; and it would be difficult to find a truer picture of Italian life and manners. Those who have lived in Italy will feel, when they read this work, as they have felt when they overlooked the Paradise Vale of the Arno. The blood-felt enthusiasm, the poetry, the music, the earnest passions, and the wild love scenes, of that beautiful Land, all breathe from its pages—Genius, with its great and free impulses, its strange caprices—Passion, with her fury, and fires—Music, with its transporting flights of song—Tragedy, with its fearful elements—Protean Love, with its triumphs and insane despair—are all painted with a master's hand. You well know Alfieri has been called "*Il Poeta intraducibile*." His Autobiography, too, is the most *untranslatable* of all his works. His style is as unique as Carlyle's, and even more electric than Schiller's. No good translation of this work has ever

been made in any language, except in the German, and, therefore, I could not, with any degree of modesty, speak with confidence of the goodness of my own. I will only say that I have followed the best editions of the original ever printed. A large number of spurious, mutilated, and distorted editions of Alfieri's life have appeared in every part of Europe. I have used the edition of Lucca, of 1814, the rarest and the best. I have often departed from the letter of the original, but I think I have transfused something of its spirit into the translation.

Trusting this little Book may add one more to the *bright* hours of your life, I have the pleasure, with assurances of the warmest regard, of being

Your most devoted Servant,

C. EDWARDS LESTER.

*New York, 12th Sept., 1845.*



ESSAY  
ON THE  
GENIUS AND TIMES OF ALFIERI.  
BY THE TRANSLATOR.

---

I. VITTORIO ALFIERI does not stand so high, the Restorer of Italian Tragedy, as the Regenerator of European Literature.

In the Sixteenth Century, Letters had reached a noble and sublime height in Italy, and the Scholars this side the Alps had founded a School in Literature not less brilliant than Raphael and Michael Angelo in the arts of Sculpture and Painting. But the Literature of Italy followed her political fortunes, and in the Seventeenth Century an age came on, when her glory seemed not only to have faded away, but to be utterly lost. Italian Scholars dallied with Letters as Courtiers with their beautiful mistresses. Vigor, originality, raciness, and beauty, were exchanged for feebleness, servile imitation, common-place and *ennui*. In fact, the only kind of Literature that yet lived, was the Lyric and Melodramatic. Lappi headed the first, and Metastasio the second. Those poetical trifles, those idle songs, those

puerile love-ditties, suited an effeminate, slavish, and cowardly age. They still seemed conscious that two golden ages had preceded them in Italy, for their works are filled with classic allusions. But they touched those themes and characters of ancient times only to defile them. They dragged the Greeks and the Romans from their strong and heroic passions, down to their own baseness and puerility. In their dramatic pieces, the gravest and most magnanimous characters of antiquity were only so many mimics and singing Comedians, who exhaled their degenerate souls in sighs of love. This generation of farce-makers, and mimicking *amateurs*, which had danced attendance to the reign of Spanish pomp and pride and power in Italy, and drank the levities and follies of France, became an object of derision to Goldoni, who stung it with sharp satire from the stage.

But this was not enough—Italy still slumbered on, degenerate, vicious. On the basis of universal sluggishness, sovereigns founded their thrones, and an enervated and cowardly people obsequiously laid their necks down to be trod on by Princes, who would have founded *tyrannies* had they not been too enervated to consolidate their structure. Then followed as a legitimate offspring, a cold, ceremonious Aristocracy, measured in its grades and circumscribed in its limits, acute only to discover and vigilant only to repress every sign or movement which threatened to disturb the narrow circle in which it moved. The Scholars of the times, such as they were, became the fawning sycophants of the Aristocracy, and they prostituted Literature and themselves together.

II. The Moral, like the physical World, purifies itself by convulsions, and in the midst of this universal degeneracy Alfieri is born.

Gifted with a bold, vigorous, and independent genius, he soon broke over the boundaries imposed by a ludicrous education. Filled with violent and generous passions, he must think and feel and speak for the masses. Like all men sent into the world to work great changes, he was conscious of his power to mould his fellow men. He was born to vindicate Light, Letters, and Truth, and like the thunder-cloud which discharges lightning to purify the air, he scathed the heartlessness, the folly, and the Tyranny of his times. Nor does Nature abandon those in whom she has reposed the hopes of the world, until their work is done; and what at the time seemed only accident or caprice in the life of Alfieri, was the steady and careful guidance of Superhuman Protection, fixing the circumstances which were to decide the life and the works of the Great Man. The man who is to reform his Times, cannot be educated by other men.

Alfieri early fled from his country, disgusted with the ceremonies, the follies and tyranny around him. He roamed, or rather raced over Europe, for many years, driven on by the stormy and turbulent passions of a soul which never came into the world for repose, and which could live only in ebullition and convulsion. The elements within him were all terrible—for a long time he did not understand himself, nor dreamed of the gigantic power he was afterwards to wield. He was driven like a storm-cloud from Country to Country, as unconscious of the work he was destin-

ed to achieve, as he was of the treasures of human hope committed to his keeping. Till late in life, he neither read nor studied books, and only five years before he wrote his first Tragedies, in which he wields the language of Italy with such magical power, he could not speak Italian. But he had now raced two or three times through most of the Countries of Europe, and unconsciously prepared himself by this strange education, for his work.

He surveyed the whole field of Literature, and found Tragedy the most neglected and defective. Shakspeare had put forth his miraculous power upon the British world, but his light shone faintly in Italy. She was now under the literary *surveillance* of France and Spain. The Spanish Tragedians were inflated with chivalrous stiffness, heartlessness, and formality. Voltaire, foul with idle gallantries, had converted the heroes of Rome and Greece into so many Louis XIV., with powdered wigs, full of despotic notions and filthy tyranny, affecting magnanimity, monsters of vice, great in ambition, pigmies by nature. In Italy, Martelli had tried to shake off the yoke of servile imitation of Greeks and Romans, and had put upon his neck a more shameful one, that of France, from whom too he had even borrowed their fastidious cadence of verse. Scipio Maffei, who came after Martelli, cast off this yoke; but he accomplished little else—in the great trial he came off without being conquered—nothing more. The action, the movement, and the soul, were wanting. Antonio Conti put on the buskin, following Maffei, and he did what he could to give life to Italian Tragedy. But none of them wielded the moulding,



magical power which alone could electrify the soul of a nation. The exciting and the terrible, which are so grand and so awful in every movement of Shakspeare's *Macbeth* and Alfieri's *Saul*, was as much beyond the conception, as the painting of Maffei, Martelli, and Conti. Sharper stings were needed to wake up the souls of men who had slept for whole generations.

Suddenly, when and where least expected, Alfieri came and cast upon the chaos the fire of his genius; and as if a scourge had lashed their souls an abandoned generation woke from its death sleep and listened to his words. The great Tragedy of the French Revolution had been acted in France, and at last all Europe had become its Theatre. Alfieri hated the Tyranny of the Bourbons with a deeper hatred than Danton, or Robespierre, or Mirabeau. But he clearly saw that whatever might be the result of things in France, Italy had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by French Domination. The terrible crimes perpetrated in the holy name of Liberty, by Republican France, had excited Alfieri's deepest abhorrence against its leaders. He tried to inspire Italy with the same sentiment, persuading them that the Stranger never could bring them liberty—but it must spring up like the Phoenix from its own ashes. He died before that great experiment was worked out, but Italy paid dear for learning the same lesson by experience.

III. The Greeks in their Tragedies had inspired Pity and Terror, but they aimed principally at the first; for unbending Fate presided over the actions of the characters represented, and the unhappy victim moved the

pity of the spectators, while he struggled like a brave man, with his destiny. So did the Romans when the brave gladiator died. The barbarous customs which still prevailed among them, required the use of such means (their writers have told us) as most conducive to Civilisation—for pity thus excited softened the ferocity of the national character. The Romans followed the Greeks blindly in this, and were their servile imitators. The Tragedies of Seneca are, by the ripe and elegant Scholars of our own Times, considered universally to be only enervated translations, not to say imitations, of those of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

The Italians of the Sixteenth Century had reduced themselves so low that they had not only forgotten the pathetic writers of Greece, but failed utterly in copying the faultless imitations of the Latins, who were their pretended models. The Spaniards and the French, being farther removed from the Literature and the Spirit of the Romans, had substituted in the place of Latin imitation a spirit of flippancy, dissoluteness, and sycophancy, which was degraded to the capacity and suited to the taste of Princes. Alfieri saw all this, and levelled all his force against it. He studied his age and found it full not of Freemen, but of Slaves—he found mankind oppressed by tyrants, so much the more abominable, as in appearance they were clement and generous. From the moment he saw Metastasio on his knees before the Empress of Austria, in the Imperial Gardens, he conceived so deep a disgust and abhorrence he would never speak to the Poet, and he resolved within himself to make that tyranny hated and despised which had

made Literature wear the chain. To do this, he must rouse a deep and ferocious sentiment—he had recourse to *terror*, and he preferred it. To attempt to regenerate the age with tears of compassion, was to abandon it to its abject state. He resolved to torment it with the spur of rage, and he brought to the work a power of language, a serenity of character, a fearful array of images, and an asperity of style, which no writer of the world has ever combined before him.

He succeeded—he broke the deep sleep of generations. The age raised itself from its foul bed, shaken by his magical power, and he breathed into the lifeless mass the energy of regenerating fire. Alfieri now drew the Italian population to the Theatres, no longer to withdraw from them fatigued and annoyed with the lifeless performance, but deeply stirred, indignant at the thought of being the fated victims of a tyranny they so deeply abhorred—they went home from the theatres thinking of their own condition, and willing to better it. They had heard words of fire, and the tyrant whose iron hands had bound the chain, and chilled the wish, and crushed the hopes for Liberty for a whole century, lived in their memory a monster of darkness and crime.

And now the old Greeks and Romans, who had only been remembered because of the nomenclature of the Schools and the fastidious reference to the Classics, which grew necessarily out of long imitation, once more became true men, workers of illustrious deeds, examples of magnanimous civil life, worthy of imitation; and Italy, emulous of Greece and Rome, was seen towering with a majestic front, “twice queen of the world.”

Alfieri in the field of Italian Tragedy stands like an oasis in the desert—neither before nor since has he had a rival or a parallel. Ugo Foscolo has done perhaps what few imitators can do. He has equalled sometimes the horror of his imagery and sometimes the harshness of his style; but in imitating also his defects, he has missed his magical strength. Monti, Silvio Pellico, Carlo Marengo, and Gio Battista Nicolini, have given Tragedy a lyrical character. Alessandro Manzoni and his successors have put history into verse;—nothing more. But all the Italian writers of the Present Century are as immeasurably removed from Alfieri as all his imitators are from the inimitable Shakspeare.

C. EDWARDS LESTER.

GENOA, 10th June, 1844.

After my manuscript was in the hands of the printer, I saw, for the first time, an English translation of this Autobiography, printed in London some thirty years ago. Those who consult it will pardon me for saying it does no great honor to the Poet, or the Translator. The writer did well to print it without his name! It can be found at the New York City Library, to the courtesy of whose Librarian I was indebted for its use.

*New York, September 12th, 1845.*



## INTRODUCTION.

---

“Plerique suam ipsi vitam narrare fidgeam potius morum quam arrogantiam arbitrati sunt.”—TACITUS, *Vita Agricolaë*.

SPEAKING, and much more writing of one's self, spring doubtless from undue self-love. Therefore, I will not preface this life by weak apologies, or false and unsatisfactory reasons, which would not be likely to gain credit with others, or win from the reader a favorable impression of my future veracity. And I frankly confess, although I may have been partially influenced by other motives, that I have been prompted to this undertaking chiefly by my self-love—a gift nature deals out in larger or smaller doses to all men, and in immoderate doses to authors, particularly to poets, or those who esteem themselves such. And yet this is a precious gift. For when it is united to an enlightened devotion for the true and the beautiful, which are one and the same thing, it becomes the mainspring of all that is noble in man.

But I will indulge no longer in this vein, and pass to assign the reasons why my self-love has prompted me to the present undertaking; then briefly speak of the way I propose to execute my work.

Having already written a good deal, and more perhaps than I should, it is very natural that among the few who have been pleased with my works, either among my contemporaries or those who shall live after me, there should be some curiosity to know something of my history. I can readily believe this without flattering myself much, for we every day see lives of

other authors, whose principal merit consists in the number of their works written and read or at least sold. But if I had no other reason I should have this—as soon as I am dead some bookseller, in the hope of making a few more *sous* by a new edition of my works, would be sure to get up *some* life of me, written most likely by one who had never known me, or understood my character, and who would gather his materials from suspicious or partial sources. Such a life, if not otherwise less valuable, would at least be less true than one I can write myself, and particularly as a writer paid and employed for such a purpose, always contrives to get up a stupid panegyric of the author reprinted, both hoping in this way to add to their common craft.

That this life then may be less bad, somewhat more veracious, and not less impartial than such a performance, I, who have always been more lavish of deeds than promises, here pledge myself and my reader to write with as little prejudice as is vouchsafed to man; and I do so because after studying myself pretty well, I have found, I think, in me on the whole, a little more good than evil. And if I have not perhaps the courage or the indiscretion to reveal all the truth, I shall certainly not have the baseness to lie.

As to the method To fatigue the reader less by giving him some resting-places, and the means of shortening his task by passing over those years less interesting, I shall divide it into five EPOCHS, corresponding with the five ages of man, and from them entitle these divisions—*Infancy, Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age*. But from the manner I have written the first three parts, and more than half the fourth, I do not flatter myself I shall finish the work with greater brevity than I have generally observed in my writings, although it would be more praiseworthy and desirable in speaking of myself. I am particularly afraid too, that in the fifth part, if I am allowed to grow old, I may fall into the chit-chat which is the last patrimony of that weak age. But if in common with others in paying the debt of nature I at last indulge in this failing, I pray the reader beforehand to pardon me, but punish me too by throwing the last part away. But I will add, that

although I do not flatter myself with great brevity in the first four parts, yet I do not intend to allow myself to run on at great length in relating trifles, but to give special attention to those particulars which contribute, when known, to the knowledge of man in general, whose mysteries we can in no way so well understand as by studying ourselves. I have not designed to tell the history of other persons any farther than may be necessary to illustrate my own, for I am recording my own acts, and not those of others. I shall hardly name an individual, unless to relate something of him either praiseworthy or indifferent. My object in this work is to illustrate human character, and of whom can one speak more intelligently than of himself? Whom has he studied so thoroughly? Whom does he know more profoundly? Whom can he more accurately weigh? having communed with his inner world for so many years.

Finally, as to style, I think it best to leave my pen free to run as it pleases, for it seems to me in a work of the heart, and not of the head, the feelings are the surest and best guide.





# PERIOD FIRST.

---

## INFANCY,

EMBRACING NINE YEARS OF VEGETATION.

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

I WAS born in the city of Asti, in Piedmont, the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1749, of noble, opulent, and respectable parents. I notice these three circumstances as fortunate ones to me for the following reasons. Noble birth was of great service to me in after times, for it enabled me without incurring the imputation of base or invidious motives to disparage nobility for its own sake, to unveil its follies, its abuses, and crimes, while its salutary influence prevented me from ever dishonoring the noble art I professed. Opulence made me free and incorruptible to serve only truth. The integrity of my parents never made me feel ashamed that I was born of noble blood. Had either of these three things been wanting to my birth, it would have lessened the virtue of my works, and I should probably have been either a poorer philosopher, or a worse man.

My father's name was Antonio Alfieri; my mother's Monica Maillard di Tournou. Her descent was Savoyard, as her barbarous surnames show, but her ancestors had for a long time been settled in Turin. My father was one of the purest of men. He was bred to no profession, and those who knew him well tell

me he was contaminated by no ambition. With a fortune equal to his rank, and moderate in all his desires, he lived sufficiently happy. When he was about fifty-five years old he married my mother, who, although very young, was the widow of the Marquis di Cacherano, a nobleman of Asti. A daughter born two years before me had more than ever inflamed the desires and excited the hopes of my good father for a son. My arrival was therefore hailed with unmeasured joy. I cannot say whether his joy was so great because a son delighted him in his old age, or because he wished to transmit his name to future times, but probably the two passions were equally mingled. However this may have been, I was sent out to nurse in the village of Rovigliasco, two miles from Asti. Almost every day my father came on foot to visit me, for he was a man of patriarchal habits. He was now sixty years of age, and though still hale and vigorous, this constant exertion, reckless as he was of exposure, brought on a fit while he was over-heated, which in a few days terminated his life. I had not then completed my first year.

My mother was left pregnant with another son, who died very young, and there remained then only a son and daughter by my father, and two daughters and one son by my mother's first husband, the Marquis di Cacherano. She was a widow now the second time, but being still young, she passed to her third marriage with the Cavalier Giacinto Alfieri di Magliano, a younger brother of a different branch of our house. This gentleman, by the death of his eldest brother, who left no children, became sole heir to his immense estate.

With him my excellent mother was perfectly happy. He was of nearly her own age, of the finest appearance, of bland and gentlemanly manners. This happy and exemplary union still exists while I am writing this life, in my forty-first year. For more than thirty years they have lived together, a shining example of every domestic virtue, beloved, respected, and admired by all who know them; my mother particularly for her ardent and heroic piety, wholly devoted as she has been to the relief of the poor. She has successively during this period lost her eldest son and daughter of her first husband,

and the two boys by the third, I only remaining the son of her old age. Circumstances too I cannot control, to my great grief, render it impossible for me to be near her. But this separation would grieve me the more were I not well persuaded that in her inflexible and lofty character, and genuine piety, she has ample compensation for the loss of her children. May I be pardoned then, this perhaps unnecessary digression in favor of the best of mothers.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### REMINISCENCES OF INFANCY.

I HAVE preserved no recollections of that stupid infantile vegetation, except of a parental uncle, who used, when I was three or fours old, to make me stand on a large old chest, and give me sugar-plums. But I hardly remember anything about him but his square-toed shoes. Many years after his death, when this fashion had disappeared, I saw a pair of dragoon's boots with square toes; it was the first pair I had seen since my infancy, and they brought back the recollection of my uncle, with all the sensations I felt when I stood on the old trunk and received the caresses and sugar-plums, and I recalled to my fancy vividly all his movements and habits, even the exquisite taste of the sugar-plums. I have let my pen run at random in this nonsense, as it may not be entirely useless to those who speculate on the mechanism of our ideas, and the affinity of thoughts with sensations.

When I was about five years old, I was reduced very low by a severe illness, and I seem to preserve still a dim consciousness of my sufferings. I had no idea what death was; still I desired to end my pain, for when my younger brother died they said he had become a little angel. After all the pains I have taken to recall my ideas, or rather sensations, before my sixth year, I can recollect nothing else.

On the marriage of our mother, my sister Julia and myself were taken from the paternal roof to live with her in the house of our step-father, who was to us more than a father while we lived there. The eldest son and daughter by the first marriage were successively sent to Turin, one to the college of the Jesuits, and the other to a convent. Soon after my sister Julia was sent to a convent in Asti. I was then in my seventh year. I have a distinct recollection of this event, as the first instance in which my sensitive faculties began to show themselves. The griefs and tears that separation of roof caused me I remember vividly still. At first, however, I could see her daily. The affections and sympathies I then felt were precisely the same I felt afterwards, when in the heat of young blood I was obliged to separate from a woman I loved, or even from some dear friend, as I happened during my life to have had three or four in the world, a good fortune denied to a good many others better worthy of it perhaps than I. This reminiscence of my first heart-sorrow furnishes the proof that all the affections of man, diverse as they may be, spring from the same principle.

All the children had now left the maternal home, and I was placed under the charge of Don Ivaldi, a good priest, who taught me from spelling and writing up to the fourth class, in which I translated not badly, as the master said, some of the lives of Cornelius Nepos, and the fables of Phædrus. But the good father was himself rather ignorant, as I afterwards discovered, and if they had left me in his hands later than my ninth year, I should probably have learned nothing more. My relations were themselves very ignorant, and often have I heard them repeat the adage so common to the nobles of those times, that a gentleman had no need of being a doctor! I had, however, some natural taste for study, and the departure of my sister, which left me alone with my master, gave me at the same time melancholy and a consecration to study.



## CHAPTER III.

## FIRST INDICATIONS OF AN IMPETUOUS CHARACTER.

BEFORE I go on with my story, I will allude to a singular circumstance in the history of my heart. The privation of the society of my sister left me long sad, and more serious than before. My visits to this beloved girl grew less and less frequent, for my master confined me closely to study, and I could see her only in vacations and holidays, nor always then. I felt some relief to my solitude in attending daily the Carmelite chapel, near the house, and listening to the music, and seeing the monks officiate in the ceremonies of the chanted mass, processions, &c. A few months weaned my thoughts from my sister, and at last I almost ceased to remember her, and I desired only to go to the Carmine at morning and evening prayers. Let us see the reason.

From the time my sister was taken from me, I had scarcely seen a young face, except the novices of Carmine. They were from fourteen to sixteen years old, and dressed in their robes they assisted in the ceremonies around the altar. Their youthful girl-like faces inspired me with the same desire to see them I had felt to see my sister. This sentiment, varied as it may have been, my reflection afterwards satisfied me was nothing but love.

All I then felt or did flowed from natural impulses, which I implicitly followed. But my pure love for these little novices went so far that at last I thought only of them and their offices. Sometimes they appeared to my fancy serving the mass with their consecrated tapers, and penitent and angelic countenances; at other times with their censers of frankincense before the altar. All absorbed in these imaginings, I forgot my studies, every occupation was irksome, and I fled to solitude.

One day the master had gone out, leaving me entirely alone. I turned over the Latin and Italian dictionaries for the word

"*Frati*" (friars); I erased the word in both, and wrote "*Padri*" (fathers), thus thinking (I know not why) that I had ennobled these little monks, whom I saw every day, although I had never spoken with them, and knew not what I really wanted from them. The only reason why I altered the dictionaries was, I had sometimes heard the word "*frati*" mentioned with contempt, and the word "*padri*" with veneration and love. These alterations rudely made with knife and pen, I carefully concealed from my master, who had no suspicion such a thing had ever been done. He who reflects a little upon this incident, trifling as it may seem, will perhaps discover it is not so puerile an affair after all—it contains the germ of human passion.

(1756.) These were the fruits of the sentiment of love acting powerfully upon my imagination, although utterly unknown to myself, and I now believe they gave birth to that deep melancholy which gained so deep a hold; it afterwards overcame every other sentiment of my nature.

One day during my eighth year while I was in this melancholy state, occasioned partly perhaps by my feeble health, I took occasion when the master and servant were gone out, to leave my room on the first floor, facing a green court-yard, and went out, and began to pull up handfuls of a herb growing there, which I chewed and swallowed with avidity in spite of its harsh and bitter taste. I had heard somebody once say there was a herb called hemlock which poisoned and caused death. I had never wished to die, nor did I even know what death was; but following some natural instinct, mingled with a grief, the cause of which I did not understand, I went to devouring eagerly this herb, thinking it might be hemlock. But its insufferable bitterness soon nauseated me, and I went back into the garden, unseen by any one, and vomited up all I had eaten. I went back to my room, and remained there silent and alone, tortured with pain in every part of my body.

In the meantime the master returned, but he guessed nothing I had done, nor did I speak of it myself. Soon after we were called to dinner. My mother, seeing my eyes swollen and inflamed as they usually are after the violence of vomiting,

insisted with great earnestness to know what was the matter. She was peremptory in her commands; my pains kept increasing so that I could not eat, but I was determined not to speak, and tried my best to conceal my sufferings. But my mother repeated her questions, and began to threaten me. At last, after eyeing me closely, she saw I was really suffering, and perceiving also a green color on my lips, which I had forgotten to wash, she became alarmed, and coming up to me, spoke of the unusual color of my lips and forced me to answer. Overcome with fear and pain, I burst into tears, and confessed it all. Some light remedy was immediately given, and no serious consequence followed. For several days I was punished by confinement, which only administered to my melan choly.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER INDICATED BY SEVERAL LITTLE FACTS.

I WILL now speak of the characteristics I was developing during these first years of budding reason. I was generally silent and tranquil, sometimes loquacious and lively, but always in extremes; obstinate and restive under restraint, but flexible to kindness. I was restrained more by the dread of being scolded than anything else, susceptible to the last degree of mortification, and unbending to force. But I can account more satisfactorily to others and to myself, for these early characteristics nature had stamped on my mind, by relating two or three trivial incidents I remember very well, which will vividly portray my character. Of all the punishments they could inflict on me, the one which cut me deepest, and brought me to a sick bed, and was, therefore, never repeated but once, was to send me to Mass, in a net night-cap which nearly covered my head. The first time I was condemned to this penance (and I've forgotten the provocation), I was dragged by the hand

of my master to the church of Carmine, an immense edifice where generally not more than forty people usually assembled. I was, however, so much cut down by it, that for more than three months I needed no reproof. In seeking, in after times, for some reason that would satisfactorily account for such an effect, I have found two which solved all my doubts. One was I believed everybody's eyes were necessarily fixed on my cap, that I appeared ugly and deformed in such a gear, and seeing me punished so horribly, they would all take me for a vile culprit. The other,—to be seen by those beloved novices cut me to the heart. Now, reader, behold in me the miniature man! thy picture and that of every other man who has been or shall be. For when we understand ourselves, we find we are children for ever.

But the dreadful effect of this punishment filled up the joy of my parents and master. The abhorred cap was threatened for every shadow of a misdemeanor, and I went to my duty trembling. But having afterwards committed some slight fault, in excuse of which I told a solemn lie to my mother, I was again sentenced to the cap, and instead of the solitary church of Carmine, I was to be taken to that of St. Martino, far from our house, in the most beautiful part of the town, frequented in the middle of the day by all the fashionables of the gay world.

Alas, what agony I suffered! I prayed, and wept, and despaired, but all in vain. That night, which I thought would be the last of my life, I not only did not close my eyes, but I do not think in all my sufferings I ever passed one more dreadful. At last the hour came. Capped, weeping, and roaring, I was dragged by the arm by my master, and pushed along by the servant behind. In this fashion we went through two or three streets without meeting a person, but as soon as we came into the crowded streets near the piazza and church of St. Martino, I stopped weeping, and roaring, and hanging back, and walked on silently and rapidly close by the side of Father Ivaldi, hoping to screen myself under the huge sleeve of the long gowned master. I reached the crowded church, led by the hand like a blind man; and, in fact, I had shut my eyes on



the threshold, nor did I open them again till I was kneeling at my place for Mass, and even then I did not raise them enough to see a human being. I was just as blind, too, in going out, and I went home with death in my heart, believing myself dishonored for ever. For that day I neither eat, nor spoke, nor studied, nor wept. At last the pain and excitement became so intense, I was sick for many days. But the desperation the cap had worked this time satisfied us all. My mother never said anything more about it, and it was some time too before I told another lie. And who knows but I owe it to that blessed cap that I afterwards became one of the men of the *fewest* lies I have ever seen!

Another story. My maternal grandmother, a matron of great consideration in Turin, a widow of one of the pompous, self-important men at court, made a visit to Asti, surrounded by all that array and pomp which leave a great impression among the children. She remained some days with my mother, and although she caressed me exceedingly, I had not become very familiar with her, as I was quite a little barbarian. When she came to leave, she told me I must tell her something that would please me most, and I should certainly have it. At first, bashfulness, fear and irresolution, and afterwards obstinacy and peevishness, determined me sullenly to persist in the same answer, *nothing*. Twenty different ways were tried to draw from me something besides that very barbarous *niente*, yet all in vain. They got nothing by all their questionings except the same eternal *niente*. I first repeated the word dry and round, afterwards in a contemptuous and trembling style, at last it came forth with tears and sobs. I was sent away from their presence, as I had richly deserved, and shut up where I could enjoy my so much beloved *niente* all alone; and my grandmother left for Turin.

(1757.) But the same fellow who would fight rather than take a present from his grandmother, had, several days before, stolen a fan from one of her trunks and hid it in his bed, and said (which was true), he had taken it to give to his sister! I paid dear for this theft, and I deserved it well; but although the thief might be a trifle worse than the liar, no allusion was

made to the cap—so much greater was my mother's fear of making me sick than seeing me become a little thief; a crime indeed, not to be much feared in my case, and easy to eradicate in one who is not driven to it by want. A desire for the possessions of others springs up and grows very fast in those who have nothing of their own.

I think I will also say something about my first spiritual confession, made between my seventh and eighth years. My master had prepared me for this operation, suggesting to me the different sins I was likely to have committed, the greater part of which I was ignorant of even the names. After going through this precious examination of my conscience with Father Ivaldi, the day was fixed for me to carry my little burden to the feet of Father Angelo, a Carmelite, the confessor of my mother. I went, but I don't know what I said, so great was my natural repugnance at being obliged to reveal all my secrets to a man I scarcely knew. I believe the father made my confession for me himself. At any rate, he seemed satisfied, and gave me absolution on condition I would kneel before my mother, and thus publicly, at the dinner table, before I sat down, ask pardon for all my past sins. This penance was too bitter a dose for me, not because I had the least objection to ask the pardon of my mother, but that prostration on the ground, in the presence of a whole company, would have been an intolerable mortification. I went home; the dinner hour came, and we were called to the table, where all the family were assembled. Every eye seemed fixed on me, and there I stood looking down, doubting, confused, immovable. I did not dare approach the table, where they all took their seats; but I did not think, for all that, that any one knew the penitential secrets of my confession. Plucking up a little courage, I stepped up to my place; my mother's menacing eyes flashed on me, and she asked me how I could sit down there? If I had done my duty, and if, in fine, I had nothing to reproach myself with? Each of these words was a dagger to my heart. My dolorous visage certainly answered for me, but my lips could not utter a word. I would not do, speak, or even make a sign of my required penance; nor could my

mother even hint it without betraying the traitor confessor. Thus the matter ended. She lost, for that day, my prostration, and I lost my dinner, and perhaps also the absolution given me on such hard terms by Father Angelo. I had not, however, at that time the sagacity to discover that Father Angelo had concerted beforehand with my mother, the penance to inflict on me. But my heart serving me in this matter better than my head, I contracted from that time a hatred quite profound enough against the above mentioned friar, and not much propensity afterwards for that sacrament, although in my subsequent confessions they never attempted any more experiments in the way of penances.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### LAST ANECDOTE OF INFANCY.

My elder brother, the Marquis di Cacherano, who had been studying for several years at the Jesuits' college, in Turin, came to pass a vacation at Asti. He was then fourteen years old, I was eight; and his society was at the same time, to me, a source both of satisfaction and chagrin. We had different fathers, and never having been much together, I felt for him no particular attachment. As we played together, however, some love for him might have sprung up in time, but he was much older than myself, had more liberty, more money, more caresses from our parents—had seen something more of the world, living at Turin—had read Virgil, and God knows what, and so many other little advantages he had, which I had not, that at last, for the first time, I began to know the feeling of *envy*. This, however, was not so atrocious in me, for I did not hate him exactly; but it excited in me a very strong desire to have the same things he possessed, although I would not have taken them from him. In this consists I think the distinction between the two kinds of envy. In the base mind it degenerates

into downright hatred of a superior, with a desire to deprive him of what the envious one cannot possess; while in a noble soul, it goes no farther than emulation, or a desire to equal or surpass the person in question. Oh! how subtle, and almost imperceptible, the difference between the seed of one's virtues and vices!

With this brother, in playing and teasing, now receiving some little present from him, and a moment after, a box on the ear, I passed away the summer happier by far than I had ever been before; for I had always been kept at home, which is the greatest plague to a boy. One of the hottest days, while everybody was taking a *SIESTA*, and he was teaching me the Prussian exercise, marching about, I fell in making a turn, and struck my head on one of the andirons, which had been left by chance in the chimney since the previous winter. The brass-knobs had been broken off, and I fell upon the sharp point and cut so deep a gash over my left eye, that I carry the scar to this day, deeply marked, and I shall carry it to the grave. I immediately sprang up from the fall without help, and called out to my brother to be still. In the first violence of the fall I felt no pain; but I certainly felt ashamed at having shown myself a soldier so unskilled in my legs. But my brother had already run to wake the master, the noise had reached my mother, and all the house was in an uproar. Neither in falling nor getting up, had a groan escaped me. But in starting for the table, I felt something very warm flowing down my face, and putting up my hand I saw the blood, and then I began to scream lustily. But all this was mere alarm, for I remember very well I felt no pain, till the surgeon came and began to dress the wound. It continued some weeks without healing, and for several days I was obliged to stay in a dark room, for the inflammation was so great as to threaten the loss of an eye.

After I got better, I was very glad to go to mass at Carmine, in my plasters and bandages, although that hospital gear set me off much worse than my night cap—a green, pretty thing, which the young men of Andalusia wear for an ornament. And indeed, afterwards, while travelling in Spain, I used to wear it myself. But I felt no repugnance to show



myself in public, with all my bandages ; for the idea of having incurred danger flattered my vanity ; or some half-formed vision of a glorious name floated over my fancy. It must have been so ; for, although I cannot recall my motives at the time, I recollect very well that whenever the matter came up, and any one asked Father Ivaldi why I wore my head bandaged, he replied I had had a fall ; and I immediately added, "*in going through the military exercise.*" And see ! how in the youngest breast, if well understood, are sown the seeds of virtue and of vice. This was, doubtless, in me a germ of the love of glory ; but neither Father Ivaldi, nor anybody else about me, had any such idea.

(1758.) About a year after this, my brother, who had, in the meantime, returned to college, at Turin, was seized with an affection of the lungs, which carried him to the grave in a few months. They took him from college, and brought him back to his mother's house, at Asti, and sent me out to the villa in the country, that I might not see him. During that summer he died at Asti, but they would never let me see him.

During this period my paternal uncle, the Cavalier Pelegrino Alfieri, who had been entrusted with the management of my property after the death of my father, returned from his travels in France, Holland and England, and stopped at Asti. He was a man of great shrewdness, and soon saw I should never learn much on that system of education. A few months after he returned to Turin, he wrote to my mother that he was anxious to place me in the academy in that city. I accordingly left home about the same time my brother died ; and I shall therefore always vividly remember the aspect, the manner and words of my broken-hearted mother, who exclaimed with sighs :—"One of my sons God has taken away for ever, and the other is spared who knows how long !" She had then by her third husband one daughter ; two sons were afterwards born while I was at the academy at Turin. I was deeply affected by my mother's grief ; but the desire of seeing new things—the thought of going to travel in a few days by the post—I who had recently made my first journey to a village fifteen miles off, in a cart drawn by two tame bullocks, and a hundred other

similar images youthful fancy brought to my mind, greatly lessened the grief I felt for the death of my brother, and for an afflicted mother. But when I actually came to set out, I felt as though I should faint away, and I cried over my separation from my mother, and my master, Father Ivaldi, still more, perhaps, than from her.

I was put into the coach by main force, by the old steward appointed to take me to my uncle's, at Turin. I finally set out attended with the servant assigned to me for the future. He was a certain Allesandrino, a youth of much sagacity, and of sufficient education for his condition and our country, where to know how to read and write was not then common.

It was early on the morning of a day I do not remember, in the month of July, 1758, when I left my mother's roof. I cried all the first post. While they were changing horses, I got down in the court-yard, and feeling very thirsty, without asking any one for a glass or to draw water for me, I went to the horse-trough and dipped in a corner of my hat, and drank all I wished. The steward, advised by the postillion, came running up and scolded me severely; but I told him that a traveller round the world should accustom himself to such things; and a good soldier should drink in no other way. Where I had fished up such Achillean notions, I don't know, for my mother had brought me up tenderly, and even with too nice attentions to my health. But it must have been a petty impulse of a vanity, which unfolded itself as soon as I was allowed to lift up my head a little from under the yoke.

I will here bring the epoch of my infancy to a close, and enter upon a world somewhat less circumscribed, which will enable me with greater brevity, and I trust, in a more worthy manner, to draw my picture. This first scrap of my life (which is, perhaps, all useless to know) will certainly prove entirely useless to all those who, thinking themselves men, forget that *men are only children of a larger growth.*

# PERIOD SECOND.

---

## CHILDHOOD,

EMBRACING NINE YEARS OF INEDUCATION.

---

### CHAPTER I.

PARTING FROM THE PARENTAL ROOF—ENTRANCE OF THE ACADEMY AT TURIN—ITS DESCRIPTION.

HERE I am, then, dashing on post-haste to Turin. When the steward paid the first post, I said a good word for the postillion, which soon gained for me the heart of the second. And now he was driving on like a thunderbolt, giving me the wink occasionally not to forget him as he chuckled away. The steward was a feeble old man. He had tired himself out telling me silly stories all through the first post, to cheer me up; and he was now sleeping away soundly, and snoring like an ox. The rapid whirl of the coach wheels gave me a pleasure I never experienced before; for in my mother's carriage, where I seldom had a chance of depositing *my* body, we never got up more than quarter of a trot, just enough to kill one; and besides, in a close carriage, one does not enjoy the sight of the horses; while in our Italian calash, one finds himself above the horses, and has a fine view of the country. On we flew from post to post, and I felt as if my heart would burst with the excitement every moment—everything was new and beautiful. We reached Turin an hour or

two after midday. It was a glorious day, and the entrance to the city through the Porta Nuova, and the Piazza of St. Carlo, to L'Annunziata, where my uncle lived, all seemed so grand and beautiful—I went almost crazy with excitement. But the evening was none too pleasant. I was in a new house with strange faces about me, without my mother or my master, with an uncle I had seen but once before, and who was less tender and kind than my mother. I passed a night of tears; and I longed once more to fly back to the dear objects I had just abandoned.

But a few days made these novelties familiar. I became so much gayer and wilder than ever, my uncle found he had a little devil in his house, who was turning everything topsy-turvy. For want of a master, my time was thrown away, and instead of waiting till October (as he intended), to place me in the academy, he caged me up there the 1st of August (1758).

At the age then of nine and a half years, I found myself suddenly transported among strangers, separated from my old friends and abandoned to myself; for that system of public education (if we please to call it such) had not the slightest influence over anything but the studies of those boys, and God knows how even this was done. No maxim of morals, no knowledge of life, was ever given to us there. And who could expect anything better, when the teachers themselves knew nothing of the world, either by theory or practice?

The Academy was a magnificent edifice in the form of a quadrangle, enclosing an immense court-yard. Two sides were occupied by the students, the others by the Royal Theatre and the archives of the King. In front of the latter, was the side we occupied, called the second and third apartments; opposite the theatre was the first apartment, of which I shall soon speak. The gallery above us, called the third apartment, was devoted to the youngest pupils and inferior scholars. The second gallery on the first floor was devoted to the older scholars, half or a third of whom studied at the University near by; the others were occupied by the military students. Every gallery contained four dormitories, each accommodating eleven young men, over whom a common priest presided, called an

assistant, generally a boor in the dress of a clergyman, who received no salary; provided with table and lodgings, for his menial services. These persons generally studied theology or law at the university. But these offices were sometimes filled by superannuated, ignorant priests. A third at least of the first apartment wing was occupied by twenty or twenty-five of the king's pages, who were entirely separated from us by the opposite angle of the court. We young students were thus provokingly stationed between a theatre we could not enter more than five or six times in all the Carnival, and the pages, who seemed in the amusements of the court, in chases, and cavalcades, to enjoy a life of so much greater freedom and pleasure than ourselves. The first apartment was occupied too by foreigners, to the exclusion of our own countrymen; they came from all the northern countries of Europe—from England principally—but there were young Russians, Germans, and Italians from other parts of the peninsula, which made the academy more like a tavern than a college, for they were bound by no rules, but to be at home before midnight. And besides they went to court, to the theatre, and chose their own company. We poor fellows, in the second and third apartments, endured the greater penance on another account. Every day in going to our chapel to mass, to the dancing and fencing schools, we were obliged to pass through the gallery of the first apartment, and to see continually before our eyes their unrestrained and insulting liberty. Very hard contrast to the severity of our condition which we generally called *Galley Slavery*. The man who made such an arrangement was a fool, and knew nothing of the human heart, or the deadly influence upon the minds of young boys, of the constant sight of so many prohibited apples.



## CHAPTER II.

## EARLY STUDIES—PEDANTIC AND BADLY DONE.

(1759.) HERE I was then, imprisoned in the third apartment in the middle chamber, and given over to the guardianship of my servant Andrea. Finding himself master of me, uncontrolled by my mother, uncle, or any other friend, he became an unchained devil, and the fellow tyrannized over me in every domestic affair, to his full satisfaction. The assistant too played a counterpart in all my studies and actions. The day after my entrance, I underwent an examination, and was pronounced well prepared for the fourth class; and three months' of close application would place me in the third. I now began to apply myself, and for the first time I felt the salutary influence of emulation in rivalling those older than myself. I passed another examination in November, and was promoted to the third class. Our master was a certain Don Degiovanni, a priest of perhaps less learning than my good Ivaldi, and he had besides much less affection and care for my interests, for he was obliged to attend as well as he could (but in a sad way to be sure), to fifteen or sixteen other pupils.

Here I was an ass among asses, and under an ass for a teacher, but I managed somehow or other to get through Cornelius Nepos, and some of the Eclogues of Virgil. We used too to compose now and then an exercise, but so insipid and puerile that, in any decent seminary, our class would have fallen among the worst of a grade below. But I had too much emulation to lag behind, and I spurred on till I caught up with or surpassed the leader, and then I fell back into my former stupidity. But I think I was excusable, as nothing could equal the tediousness and insipidity of such studies. We translated to be sure the lives of Cornelius Nepos, but none of us, probably not even the master himself, knew who these men were whose lives we studied, or in what country they were born, or in what age, or under what sort of governments

they lived, or indeed what a government meant. All our ideas were circumscribed, false, or confused; no aim in the teacher, and least of all any attraction for the pupils. No one gave any attention to us except by chance, and whoever did was sure not to understand his business. Thus is youth cruelly and hopelessly betrayed!

After passing most of the year 1759 in similar studies, I was promoted in November to a higher class. The master, Don Amatis, was a priest of genius, shrewdness, and learning. Under him I made more rapid progress, and as far as that system of superficial study permitted, I acquired the Latin tongue. I had a rival who often surpassed me in composition exercises, and all my emulation was aroused. I was obliged to yield to him, however, in power of memory, for he would repeat six hundred verses of the *Georgics* of Virgil at once, without a mistake, while to my great mortification I could scarcely get up to four hundred, and even these I could not do well. But in recalling my feelings during those childish struggles, it seems to me that my disposition was not naturally bad, for although his triumph of two hundred lines suffocated me with passion, and I often vented my rage in weeping, and unjustifiable abuse of my rival, yet either from his having a better disposition than myself, or that I soon sobered down, I know not how, we never quarrelled, although about an equal match for each other. But on the whole we were pretty good friends. I think my extravagant ambition found some consolation and recompense for the inferiority of my memory in the composition prizes, which I almost always bore off; besides I could not hate him, for he was a magnanimous and beautiful boy, and I have always been so fond of beauty in living things, in man, and in everything, it has often swayed my judgment to the prejudice of truth.

During that entire year my morals were kept pure, unless nature herself, unconsciously to me, was making her way to disturb them. I chanced about this time (and I cannot remember how), to get hold of a copy of the complete works of Ariosto, in four small volumes. I certainly did not buy it, for I had no money. I did not steal it, for I remember

very well everything I ever stole. I have an indistinct notion I got it one volume at a time by way of barter from a fellow, for half a chicken they served up to us Sundays. My first Ariosto must thus have cost me a couple of chickens every month. But I am not quite certain of all this, and I regret it the more, for I would give a great deal to know I had first drank at the springs of Poesy at the expense of my stomach, sacrificing to the muses the best morsel we ever had.

But this was not the only bartering I carried on. I remember very well that blessed Sunday half-chicken I never eat for six months together. I bargained it away for stories told us by a gluttonous fellow, who sharpened his wit to fill his belly, and who would admit no hearer who would not give him the best part of his dinner. But, however I came by it, I had my Ariosto, which I read here and there, without method or understanding half I read. This shows what progress we made in books, for I, the prince of these students of Humanity, who could read the Georgics much more difficult than the Æneid, was puzzled to understand the easiest of all the Italian poets. I shall never forget that, in the canto of Alcina, in those exquisite verses which describe her beauty, I had to study with all my might to comprehend them, and failed at last. I lacked too many hints of every kind to accomplish it. The last two verses of that stanza—

“Non così strettamente edera preme,”

I could not understand. I consulted my rival, but he understood the matter no better than myself, and we plunged into a sea of conjecture. This stolen reading and commentary of Ariosto ended in the assistant finding out that a certain little book was going through our hands, which we hid on his approach. He discovered it—he seized it, made us give up the other volumes, consigned them to the president, and we poor little poets were robbed of our poetical guide, and put to shame.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FRIENDS IN TURIN WHO HAD THE CARE OF MY EDUCATION.

DURING my first two years at the academy, I learned little, and nearly destroyed my health. Our food was bad, and we had not even enough such as it was. We had too many privations, and too little sleep. All this I had been poorly prepared for, by the system of life I had for nine years been accustomed to in the house of my mother. I increased nothing in stature, and grew as slim and pale as a little wax taper. This brought upon me a combination of complaints, among others an eruption of a viscous fetid humor from every part of my head, preceded by such a headache my temples became black, and my skin looked like charcoal, peeling off so frequently it changed entirely.

My paternal uncle, the Cavalier Pellegrino Alfieri, had been made governor of the city of Cuneo, where he resided eight months in the year, which left me none of my relatives at Turin except my mother's, of the house of Tornon, and a cousin of my father, the Count Benedetto Alfieri. He was first architect to the king, and lived near the royal theatre he had designed and executed with elegance and skill. I went to dine with him sometimes, and occasionally for a call; but all this was under the dictation of Andrea, who ruled me like a despot, under pretence always of acting under the orders of my uncle at Cuneo.

Count Benedict was certainly a man of great virtue, and had a good heart. He loved and caressed me, was passionately fond of his art, simple in his character, and insensible to everything but the fine arts. Among many other things, I infer his unbounded passion for architecture, from his talking to me very often and with much enthusiasm, urchin as I was and ignorant of every art, of the divine Michel Angelo Buonarotti, whose name he never spoke without bowing his head or taking off his cap, with a reverence and humility I shall never

forget. He had passed a great part of his life in Rome; his fancy was full of the beautiful antique, but yet he often violated good taste to suit his architecture to his times. We have a proof of this in his whimsical church of Carignano, constructed after the model of a fan. But such little blemishes he has amply atoned for in the Royal Theatre, the Dome of the King's Riding-School, hung with great skill and boldness, the Saloon of Stupinigi, and the solid and imposing façade of the temple of St. Pietro in Geneva. To have filled his architectural fame, nothing was wanting but a larger purse than the King of Sardinia gave him. The proof of this may be found in the numerous grand designs he left at his death, which were taken possession of by the king. Among them were various projects for different embellishments in Turin: rebuilding that contemptible wall which separates the Piazza del Castello from the Piazza Reale, which for some reason I don't understand, they call the Pavilion. I now take a great pleasure in speaking of this extraordinary man, and now only do I appreciate his worth. For when I was in the academy, in spite of his kindness I used to think he was rather tedious. And (think of the torture of good sense, and the power of false maxims), I was most of all disgusted with his blessed Tuscan tongue, which his long residence in Rome would never let him give up, although the speaking of Italian was *contraband* in the *amphibious* city of Turin. But such is the power of beauty and truth, that the very people who used to laugh at my uncle's *Tuscanisms*, when he came back to live at Turin, after a while found out he really spoke *a language*, and they mauled a barbarous jargon and began to vie with one another in mumbling to him their Tuscan, and particularly those gentlemen who wished to patch up their old houses into palaces—Fruitless efforts! in which gratuitously, for mere friendship, that best of men threw away the half of his time, pleasing others and displeasing both himself and his art. Very many houses of the nobility of Turin he embellished with porticos, flights of steps, gates, internal comforts and conveniences, which will be lasting monuments of his generosity to his friends, or those who called themselves such.



He had made a journey to Naples with my father, two years before he married my mother. From him, too, I afterwards learned many things respecting my father. Among others, in their visit to Vesuvius, my father had insisted upon being lowered, by main force, within the crust of the inner crater, which was very deep. This was done by means of ropes, managed by people who stood on the summit over the crater. Twenty years after, when I went there on my first visit, everything was changed, and that descent was impossible. But it is time for me to come back to my story.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONTINUATION OF THESE NO-STUDIES.

No one of my relations now seemed to borrow any solicitude about my advancement, and I went on wasting the most beautiful years of my life. I made little or no progress in study, and every day my health grew worse. Besides a feeble constitution, I was affected with sores which made me the laughing-stock of my companions, who applied to me the very polite title of the *carrión*, while the more spirited and humane added still the epithet *rotten*. This state of health induced a malignant melancholy, and a love of solitude thus became every day more deeply rooted in my nature.

But in the year 1760 I entered Rhetoric, although I could only now and then glance at my books; but very little study was necessary for those classes. The professor of Rhetoric was decidedly inferior to my last. He explained to us the *Æneid*, and made us write Latin verses; but it appeared to me I was, on the whole, losing ground in the Latin tongue. And as I was not the last among my school-fellows, I infer that the same must have been true of them.

In that year of pretended rhetoric, I succeeded in recovering my little Ariosto. I got it by stealth, one volume at a time,

from the under prior, who had placed it on one of the shelves of his library. The reprisal was made in the following manner. Some of us more favored ones were admitted to his room, whose windows gave us a finer view of the game of *pallon grosso* than we had from our wing. I had the shrewdness, when I had taken a volume, to fill up the vacancy by crowding the books together, and in four days, to my great joy, I got back my four little volumes, but I told no living creature of it. But as I recall those times, I remember that after the reprisal I scarcely read Ariosto at all. The principal reason of this was my poor health; but I had now become so accomplished a rhetorician, I understood the Poet less than ever. Besides, the constant interruption of his narratives, in the best parts, leaves one entirely *non-plussed* with only half a story—something which displeases me even now, for it is contrary to truth, and destroys all poetic effect. I knew not where to go to recover the thread of the story, and I finished by letting it alone. Tasso would have been much better adapted to my circumstances, but I did not even know his name. I happened also, I don't know how, to get hold of the *Æneid* of Anibale Caro, which I read several times with the greatest avidity, deeply interested in the fate of Turnus and Camilla. I used to avail myself, by stealth, of this translation, in my theses, which retarded my progress in Latin. I had no knowledge of any of our other poets, except Metastasio, as "*Il Catone*," "*L'Artaserse*," "*L'Olimpiade*," and others I happened to get hold of in the opera-books of the carnival. These works delighted me, till I came to a chorus which interrupted the flow of feeling, just as I began to penetrate the story. This vexed and harassed me still more than the interruptions in Ariosto. My master gave me some of Goldoni's comedies, which diverted me exceedingly. But the genius of the drama, whose germ was in my soul, was smothered and almost extinguished for want of nourishment and excitement, and, indeed, everything else. And the fact is, my ignorance and that of my teachers, and the negligence of everybody in everything, went as far as possible.

During those long and frequent intervals in which I was con-

fined by illness, one of my schoolmates, who was older and stronger, and even more stupid than myself, used to get me to write his compositions, translations, paraphrases, and verses. The arguments he resorted to were really beautiful. "If you will write my composition, I will give you two playing balls—here they are, well made, four colors, beautiful cloth, and very elastic. And," he continued, "if you wont write it, I'll give you two knocks on the head," and suiting the action to the word he raised his powerful fist over me. I thought it best to take the two balls and write his composition. At first I used to do my best, and the master was somewhat astonished at the unexpected progress of the fellow who had hitherto shown himself a mole. I sacredly kept his secret, more from a taciturn disposition than any fear of the Cyclop. But at last I got tired of his balls, and disgusted with the fatigue. Not a little vexed too, that the fellow should shine in my colors, I went on deteriorating by degrees, till it ended by my throwing in some such solecisms as "*il potebam*," which bring hisses from school-fellows, and lashes from masters. But although he was ridiculed in public, and forced to appear once more in his native ass's skin, yet he did not dare to wreak his vengeance on me, nor try to force me to do any more of his work. He writhed and chafed under the consciousness of the shame I could bring upon him by making the disclosure. This, however, I never did, but I had a good laugh when I heard the scholars talk about "*il potebam*," for no one dreamed I had a finger in it. And I was after all perhaps kept in the limits of discretion by the image of that hand which always seemed raised over my head, for this would have been the natural ransom of so many balls ill-used to get him laughed at. From all this I learned that mutual fear governs the world.

(1761.) In such puerile, juvenile vicissitudes, often infirm, and always in bad health, I consumed that year of rhetoric. I passed the usual examination, and found myself prepared for philosophy. Twice a day our lectures called us from the Academy to the University near by. The morning lesson was in geometry, the afternoon was devoted to philosophy, or logic. Here I was then, scarcely thirteen years old, conceited into a philoso-

pher. The very name made me proud, for it brought me into the second class, and secured the delightful privilege of leaving the academy twice a day, when I took a ramble by stealth through the town under the pretence of necessity.

Although I was the smallest of all my companions in the second apartment, yet my inferiority of stature, of age, and of strength, imparted to me just in inverse proportion an ambition to distinguish myself. And at first I studied enough to distinguish myself at the recitations, conducted in the evening by our academical ushers. I answered the questions as well as the rest, and sometimes better, but this was the simple result of a good memory, for to tell the truth I understood nothing of that pedantic philosophy, insipid in itself, and concealed under the Latin I was still struggling with, and conquering as well as I could by mere force of the dictionary. In geometry I made the entire course, that is to say I went over the first six books of Euclid, but I never understood even the fourteenth proposition, and I hardly understand it now, for I have always had an anti-geometrical head.

That school of Peripatetic Philosophy was held after dinner, and was nothing more than a contrivance for sleeping on the feet. During the first half hour we wrote after the dictation of the Professor, and the three quarters remaining we spent in listening to a lecture in Latin (and God knows what sort of Latin this was). All of us wrapped up in our cloaks slept soundly. No other sound was heard among those philosophers but the voice of the languid half-dozing Professor, and the tones of the snorers, whose alto, basso, and medio, made up a beautiful chorus. This soporific philosophy, irresistible of itself, was sure to put us all to sleep, for we always had our rest broken in the morning at too early an hour. This was the principal cause of all my inconveniences, for I could not digest my supper in bed. The superiors became aware of it, and at last granted me permission to sleep till seven, instead of a quarter before six, the hour fixed for rising, or rather being hauled out of bed to go down to the chapel to say morning prayers, and then studying till half-past seven.

## CHAPTER V.

VARIOUS TRIFLES IN THE SAME TRAIN AS THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

(1762.) In the winter of 1762, my uncle, the governor of Cuneo, passed some months at Turin. He saw the feebleness of my health, and obtained for me some indulgences, *i. e.* something better to eat, or rather something more healthy. This, joined to a little more relaxation, consequent upon leaving the house every day to go to the University, and my uncle's good dinners during the vacation, with my periodical nap of three-quarters of an hour in the school, all combined to restore my strength, and my form began to develope and grow.

My uncle and tutor thought it best my sister Julia should be taken from the convent of S. Anastasio in Asti, where she had been more than seven years under an aunt (the widow of the Marquis Trotti), who had retired there herself; and be placed in the convent of S. Croce at Turin. Little Julia had won absolute sway over this good aunt, who loved her so well, she had almost ruined her, by utterly neglecting her education. She was now nearly fifteen, two years older than myself. In Italy this is the age of dawning passion, when the tender and inexperienced heart yields to the first impulse of love. A little passion of hers, such as could find place in a convent, had displeased our uncle (although the match would have been a good one), and determined him to bring her to Turin, and confide her to the care of a maternal aunt, a nun of S. Croce.

The sight of this sister whom I once so tenderly loved now grown into such beauty, drove away my sadness and nearly restored my health. Her society, or rather a sight of her now and then, made me still happier, for it consoled her in this trial of her heart, on being so suddenly torn away from her lover, whom she so resolutely determined to marry. Andrea allowed me to visit her every Sunday and Thursday, our only holidays, and often did I pass that whole hour weeping with her



at the grate; but those meetings of tears, sad as they were, lightened my heart, and I went homeward less sad although I was never cheerful. Like a philosopher (as I was this year), I tried to inspire her to persist in her choice, since she would at last overcome the resolution of my uncle. But time, which sways so magically the stoutest hearts, is not slow in changing a girl's. Absence from her lover, opposition encountered, diversions and changes with all the excitements of a new and more cheerful life, finally dispelled her sadness and restored her spirits again.

During the holidays this year, I went for the first time to the theatre of Carignano to see the opera buffa. This signal favor I owed to my uncle the architect, in whose house I lodged that night, for the regulations of the academy required us to be at home by half past eleven; and besides we were allowed to attend no other theatre but the king's, where we went all together once a week during the carnival. My indulgent uncle won for me this forbidden pleasure, by telling the superiors he would take me for a day and night to his villa. This opera was "*Il Mercato di Malmantile*," performed by the best Buffi of Italy, Carratoli and Baglione with his two daughters; and composed by one of the first masters. The gaiety and variety of that divine music made a profound impression on me, and left a wake of harmony in my ears and imagination, and so deeply stirred my soul that for many weeks I was overwhelmed with a strange, but not unpleasing melancholy and I felt a nausea for my studies. A wild ebullition of whimsical ideas followed, and I should have written the most vivid lines had I not been unknown to myself, and to those who pretended to teach me. It was the first time music had deeply stirred my soul, and I did not recover from its power; for it was by far the most profound of all my early feelings. As I recall my carnival days, with the few grand operas I heard, and compare the emotions there awakened, with those I now feel on returning from a performance of a composition I have not recently heard, I feel the same uncontrollable enthusiasm of soul, and my heart and intellect are as deeply agitated by every sound, especially in the parts of the *Contralto* and *Prima Donna*. Nothing

wakes up more various or terrible feelings in my soul. I have conceived nearly all my tragedies while hearing music, or a few hours afterwards.

I had now finished my first year in the university; the ushers reported to my uncle (and I cannot tell why), that I had studied with extreme assiduity; and he invited me to pass the month of August with him at Cuneo. This little trip from Turin to Cuneo through the rich smiling plain of beautiful Piedmont, was the second I ever had taken; it delighted me exceedingly and improved my health, for fresh air and exercise have always been to me the elements of life. But the pleasure of that excursion was not a little diminished by my being obliged to make it in the *vettura*, at a snail-pace, when I had four or five years before dashed on so like lightning from Asti to Turin. It seemed to me I had gone backward, and grown old, and I felt ashamed of so humiliating and frozen a donkey pace. When we entered Carignano, Raconigi, Savigliano, and even the smallest villages, I crouched down in a corner of the carriage, and shut my eyes so as neither to see nor be seen, for it seemed to me every soul there would know me for the same fellow who had in other days run the same course with so much splendor. Were these the feelings of a fervid and soaring mind, or one light and vain-glorious? I cannot say: others will judge by my after life. But I am well persuaded if I had had, at this period, some one over me who knew the human heart, he might by wise management have made use of this passion—love of glory—so strong in my youth, in giving a noble direction to my character.

During this short stay in Cuneo I wrote my first sonnet. I will not, however, call it mine, for it was a concoction of lines either taken entire, or garbled and strung together from Metastasio and Ariosto, the only Italian poets I had ever read. But I believe there was little rhyme or rhythm about them—for although I had made Latin verses, Hexameter and Pentameter, no one had ever taught me a single rule of Italian verse. I have racked my brain to recall this sonnet—but I cannot remember a line. I only knew it was inspired by, and written in praise of a lady my uncle loved, with whom I was also

pleased. This sonnet must have been a sad affair, without doubt, but it was highly praised by the lady herself, who knew nothing about poetry, and by others like her—so I believed myself a poet. But my uncle, who was an austere soldier, although sufficiently intelligent about historical and political affairs, neither knew nor cared anything about poetry, and so far from encouraging my budding muse, he disapproved the lines, and ridiculed me for writing them. This dried up my little poetical vein to the fountain; I had no more inclination to play the poet after this, nor did I write another line till I was five-and-twenty. How many good or bad verses that uncle of mine crushed with that miserable first-born sonnet!

(1763.) That stupid year of philosophy was followed by physics and ethics: the former we studied in the morning, and we had the lecture on ethics for our afternoon nap. Physics pleased me somewhat; but the constant struggle with the Latin tongue, and my ignorance of geometry, were invincible impediments to my progress. And to my lasting shame, I confess through love of the truth, that after attending the lectures of the celebrated father Beccaria on physics for a whole year, not a single definition is left in my head, and I neither know nor understand anything at all of his brilliant course on electricity, enriched by all his noble discoveries. Here, too, as in geometry, by mere dint of memory I carried myself respectably through the examinations, and received from the ushers more praise than blame.

In the winter of 1763 my uncle proposed making me a present, something that never before had happened, as a reward for my close application, for so they represented me to him. This was announced to me three months before, with prophetic emphasis, by Andrea, who said he had it from a good source, that I should receive it if I continued to behave well, but I could not find out what the present was likely to be. This vague hope, colored by fancy, inspired me to fresh exertion, and greatly invigorated my parrot-learning. Finally, one day my uncle's servant showed the famous future present; it was a silver sword, beautifully wrought. I was now anxious to get it, I had seen it—waited for it a long time, and I thought

I had merited it very well—but *it never came!* From what I afterwards gathered, they wanted to have me *ask my uncle for it.* But that same character which so many years before had kept me from saying what I would have from my grandmother, here also sealed my mouth. I never would ask for the sword, and I never got it.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

WEAKNESS OF MY CONSTITUTION—CONTINUAL ILL-HEALTH—INCAPACITY FOR EVERY KIND OF EXERCISE, ESPECIALLY DANCING—THE REASON.

In this manner passed my year of Physics. In the summer my uncle was appointed Viceroy to Sardinia, and he made his preparations to go to his post. He set out in September—leaving me to the care of the few relatives I still had in Turin, renouncing the charge of my pecuniary affairs, or rather associating with him in my guardianship a cavalier who was one of his friends.

I now began to have a little more liberty under my new guardian, and for the first time a small monthly allowance was granted to me. My uncle never had consented to this, although at the time it seemed unreasonable, as indeed it does now. Perhaps that fellow, Andrea, had opposed it making my expenses (and I believe his own at the same time), for he was fond of having these matters in his own hands, as it subjected me more entirely to his will.

At the close of the year 1762, I entered upon the study of civil and canon Law, a course which in four years brings the scholar to the summit of glory—a laureate! After some weeks, however, of legal study, I relapsed into the same malady which had afflicted me two years before, a universal eruption of the skin in every part of the cranium, and it was doubly severe this time. O! how my poor head revolted from those



jumbles of definitions, digests, and similar stuff of both departments of law. I can only compare the condition of my head to the parched earth, which opens in every direction to be healed up by the grateful rain. From these irruptions issued in large quantities a viscous humor, to such a degree that this time I could not save my hair from the odious scissors. A month rid me of that horrible disease, but left me shaved and periwigged. This was one of the most grievous affairs I have ever suffered, in all my life; both on account of the loss of my hair, and the deadly acquisition of the wig, which became the laughing-stock of my petulant companions. I began by openly defending my wig. But I soon saw that in trying to save it I was more likely to lose my head, and I changed my tactics, and assumed the most brisk part in the attack. I snatched the poor wig before some one else did the job, and swung it high in the air, venting upon it the greatest vituperation. In a few days the public indignation was exhausted. I escaped all further persecution, and I could say I carried the most respectable wig in the hall. I thus learned how much better it is to appear to yield voluntarily what we cannot help being wrung from us by force.

This year I took lessons in geography, and tried to practise the harp. The former I liked. I was fond of globes and charts, and I made some progress also in the study of ancient history. My master, who was from La Val d'Aosta, lent me various books in French, which I was now beginning to understand—among others a *Gil Blas*, which completely enchanted me. It was the first book I had ever read from beginning to end, except the *Æneid* of Caro, and I liked it a great deal better. I now plunged into romances, and read them by the score, as *Cassander*, *Almachilde*, and the most tragic and the most sentimental gave me equal delight. Among others, "*Les Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*," I read at least ten times.

As to my harp, although I had an unbounded passion for music, and had some taste for it, yet I made little progress, except in the mechanical part. Written music I could never get into my head, it was all ear and memory. This I attribute, however, very much to the hour I took my lesson, immediately



after dinner—a time which all through my life I have found utterly unpropitious for any kind of intellectual exertion, even simple application of the eyes to paper, or any object whatever. The notes, with their five parallel lines, blurred my eyes, and after rising from a lesson of an hour, I could scarcely see, and was ill and stupid the rest of the day.

In fencing and dancing I made no more progress. I was absolutely too weak to support myself in the fencing attitudes, and besides the lesson came after dinner, and often I left the harp to take up the sword. As for dancing, I always abhorred it, and what made it the more insufferable the master was a Frenchman, fresh from Paris. He had a certain impudently civil air about him; his movements and discourse were a perpetual caricature, all of which quadrupled my inbred abhorrence of his puppet-show arts. Things got to such a pass finally, that after a few months I abandoned the thing altogether. I have never since known how to dance a half *minué*, and this word alone has always since made me laugh and fret by turns, which are the two effects I have always experienced from the French themselves, and everything which belongs to them, for taken altogether they are nothing more than an everlasting and often badly danced *minué*. This unfavorable and perhaps exaggerated impression conceived against the French nation, and which I never could shake off, I attribute chiefly to this same dancing-master. The French have without doubt many choice and estimable qualities, but first impressions strongly rooted are never blotted out. Reason may combat them, but we must always make allowance for them if we would judge with impartiality, and even then perhaps our labor will be in vain. Two other things on a parallel with this made me decidedly anti-Gallic, even from childhood. The first was a sight of the ladies in the suite of the Duchess of Parma (who was born in France), when she passed through Asti in going or coming from Paris. They were all bedaubed with that odious *rouge* which the French then used exclusively. It struck my boyish fancy as very singular, for I had never seen it before, and I often spoke of it for several years. I could not com-

prehend the design of an ornament so whimsical, so ridiculous, so opposed to the nature of things. For when sickness, or drunkenness, or any other cause gives to the face this disgusting redness, everybody who can conceals it, or shows it only to excite laughter or pity. These French *affectations* left upon my mind a deep and lasting impression of disgust and horror against the female part of that nation.

The other vein of contempt had its origin many years after, when I was studying geography. The map showed the vast difference, in extent and population, between England or Prussia and France; and hearing it said, as the news of the war reached us, that France was beaten by land and sea, united with the recollection of the early stories told me, that the French had often been masters of Asti, and finally had been made prisoners, to the number of six or seven thousand, as cowards, without lifting a finger in defence, after having as usual carried themselves so arrogantly and tyrannically; all these different particulars uniting, and being reflected from the face of this French dancing-master, all combined to root deeply in my heart a mixture of abhorrence and disgust for that fastidious nation. And really, whoever will search, in his maturity, for the radical causes of his likes and dislikes for individuals or nations, will find, perhaps, in his infancy, the germ of all such feelings, and not less curious or absurd than I have myself exposed. Oh! what a little thing man is!

---

## CHAPTER VII.

DEATH OF MY PATERNAL UNCLE—MY FIRST EMANCIPATION—ENTRANCE TO THE FIRST APARTMENT OF THE ACADEMY.

My uncle died after a residence at Cagliari of ten months. He was 60 years old; but he was always infirm, and before he sailed for Sardinia he often told me I should never see him again. I had little affection for him, for I had seen him very

rarely, and he treated me with too much austerity, although he was never unjust. He was highly esteemed for his rectitude and courage, and had distinguished himself in battle. His character was inflexible, and he had all the qualities requisite for command. He had the reputation also of much talent, somewhat smothered, however, by erudition, without system, copious and loquacious withal, in history, ancient and modern. I was little grieved, then, at his death; it happened a great way off, it had been predicted by all his friends, and by it I acquired my liberty with my large patrimony, which was considerably increased by his estate.

At the age of fourteen, the laws of Piedmont emancipate the ward from his guardian, and place him under a curator, who leaves him master of his annual income, and can only prevent him from alienating his real estate. This new independence at the age of fourteen, inflamed my fancy, and I began to build my air-castles.

My governor, Andrea, was very properly dismissed by my guardian, for he had abandoned himself without restraint to libertinism, to wine and quarrels, and had become a finished scoundrel; for he had nothing to do, and no one to watch him. He had always treated me insolently, and when he was intoxicated, which was four or five days in the week, he even used to beat me. During my frequent illness, after seeing me at dinner, he used to go off and leave me shut up in my room till supper time, which contributed more than anything else to impede my progress to health, and increase the horrible melancholy of my constitution. And yet who would believe I wept several weeks for the loss of the fellow? For many months I used to visit him every Thursday and Sunday, for he was prohibited from setting his foot over the threshold of the academy. I made my new servant attend me during these visits. He was a rude but good fellow. For a long time I gave Andrea all my allowance of money. At last he found employment; time and change of scene banished him from my recollection. In seeking for a solution of the strange problem, why I cherished an affection so unreasonable for so profligate a fellow, I should say, if I wished to embellish

my story, that it sprang from the natural generosity of my disposition. But this was not really the cause, although soon after, when, in reading Plutarch, I began to be inflamed with the love of glory and virtue, I prized and practised, as far as I could, the divine art of rendering good for evil. My affection for Andrea, who had inflicted upon me so many abuses, proceeded partly from being with him seven years, and partly from his own good qualities, his quickness of conception, his great dexterity and agility of action, and the long stories and romantic tales he used to tell me, so full of wit, feeling, and imagination; all these combined to ingratiate him in my favor again, very soon after I had recovered from the effect of his abuse and vexations. But, after all, I cannot understand how one who abhorred so much by nature as myself being teased and tormented, could ever have borne his yoke. This reflection has often since made me pity those princes who, without being imbecile, allow themselves to be controlled by those who won an ascendancy over them in their youth, for it is a fatal age for receiving lasting impressions.

The first fruit I reaped from the death of my uncle was going to a riding-school, which I had always longed for, but never been gratified in. The Prior knew how anxious I was about it, and resolved on turning it to my intellectual advantage. He promised me I should be gratified, when I had taken the highest honor of the university, called the *Magistero*, which crowns in a public examination, two years of Logic, Physics, and Geometry. I took up his offer, employed a private tutor to familiarize me at least with the definitions of those sciences, and in fifteen or twenty days I put up at random a dozen Latin periods, to serve as answers to the few questions of the examiners. It finally happened, but how I cannot tell, that in less than a month I was matriculated as Master of Arts, and so I mounted for the first time the back of a horse, an art I happened to understand some years after. I was now below the middle size, and besides being weak generally, I was particularly feeble in the knees, which were great draw-backs to my progress. But enthusiasm and a good will atoned for all this in a great measure, and in a short time I could manage a



horse pretty well, and had some knowledge of his disposition. To this delightful and noble exercise I was soon indebted for improvement in health, increase of strength, and robustness of constitution, and I entered into a new existence.

Having now buried my uncle, bartered away my guardian for a curator, made Master of Arts, liberated from the yoke of Andrea, and mounted on a noble horse, I made rapid advances to manhood. I frankly told both the prior and the curator I was tired of law, was wasting my time, and would abandon it altogether. These gentlemen discussed my proposition, and concluded to let me pass to the first apartment, where very little restraint was exercised over the pupils.

I made my entrance the 8th of May, 1763. During the summer I was nearly alone, but in the autumn foreigners began to flock in from almost every country but France; the principal part, however, were English. A princely table, much dissipation, very little study, plenty of sleep, daily exercise on horseback, doing everything just as I pleased, soon redoubled my health, my vivacity and daring. My hair grew out again; I threw my wig away, and began to dress in my own style. For five years I had been compelled by the rules of the academy to wear black, which I had become perfectly disgusted with, and I now went to the top of the fashion.—My curator groaned over my extravagance, but the tailor, knowing I was able to pay, gave me as much credit as I wished, and I am pretty well persuaded clothed himself in the meantime out of my pocket.

I was now my own master, and as soon as I got possession of my fortune I found friends and companions by the score, and flatterers too; in a word all that comes and goes with money. Into the midst of this new and whirling vortex I was thrown before I was fifteen; but I did not become so dissipated and foolish as might easily have been expected. From time to time I felt some silent impulses to study, and a kind of horror and shame at the thought of my ignorance, in which I could not deceive myself, nor attempt to deceive others. But destitute of any solid basis of education—without a guide—understanding no language well, I knew not what to apply myself to, nor how I should go to work. Reading a



host of French romances (for we have few readable ones in Italian), continual conversation with foreigners, with no opportunity of learning or speaking Italian; at last put to flight the little stock of Tuscan I had picked up during the two or three years of buffoon studies at Humanity and donkey Rhetoric. My empty head was so completely filled with French, that in a fit of study which came over me for two or three months this year, I plunged into the thirty-six volumes of Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, which I read through on the jump. I made extracts from it up to the eighteenth book—and this silly, tedious and ridiculous toil I prosecuted with great resolution, and even a kind of delight, but with little or no utility. This book did not a little towards lessening my respect for the priests and their concerns. But I soon threw aside Fleury and thought of him no more. These extracts I did not burn till a few years ago, and they afforded me no little amusement twenty years after they were written. From ecclesiastical history I plunged into romances—"The Arabian Nights Entertainments," among others, I read through several times. I had become intimate with a good many young men of the city, who were educated under private tutors—we met every day and used to make excursions on certain old rack-a-bones of the livery stables, and it's a wonder we did not break our necks a thousand times.—One of our tricks was to race down from the Hermitage of Camaldoli to Turin, a steep flint hill with a narrow path; I would not have done it afterwards with the best horse in the world. We used to race through the woods between the Po and the Dora, chasing down my servant, all of us like so many hunters, and he on his nag playing off the stag. Sometimes he unbridled his *shakely* beast, and we rushed on the pursuit with loud cracks of the whips and wild hurrahs, in imitation of the windings of the hunter's horn, leaping over immense ditches, rolling and tumbling often all together, swimming more frequently still the Dora, at its junction with the Po. Our mad-cap tricks became so well known at last that nobody would risk us with a horse for love or money. But these same exposures strengthened my body, invigorated my mind,

and were preparing my spirit for action and endurance, and perhaps to avail myself wisely at last of my physical and moral liberty.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TOTAL IDLENESS—OPPOSITION ENCOUNTERED AND BRAVELY OVERCOME.

(1764.) No one now interfered in my affairs except the new servant placed over me by my curator, but he was a semi-governor, and had orders to attend me wherever I went. But the truth was he did not know any too much, and was so fond of money, that by giving him his price I did my own pleasure, and he never interfered with me. But my disposition was restless, and I soon got tired of always being tagged about—a servitude the more intolerable, as I was the only student in the whole apartment thus treated, for they all came and went when and where they pleased. Nor was I reconciled at all by the reason they assigned for all this, viz. that I was younger than they—all my companions being still under fifteen; so I took it into my head to go out alone, without saying anything to the servant or anybody else.

The first time I was reprimanded by the governor, but I immediately repeated it. The second time I was arrested and confined to my room. Some days after I was liberated, when I went out again. I was now placed in closer confinement. Once more free I repeated the offence; the severity of the penalty corresponded with the heinousness of the crime; and I was confined for a month, but it had no effect. Finally I told them they had better not let me out at all, for just as sure as they did I should do the same thing again. I wished no difference made in my treatment from that of my companions. I declared this distinction odious and unjust, that it made me the laughing-stock of the apartment, and if the governor thought

I was not old enough to take care of myself, he could put me back into the second apartment. This impudent conduct was followed by close confinement for more than three months, including the entire Carnival of 1764. I was now firmly resolved never to ask for my liberty; I raged on, but I did not give up, and I believe I would have rotted rather than yield the point. I slept most of the day. Towards evening I got up and carried my mattress to the fireside and threw myself on it again, determined not to eat the dinner they brought me. I cooked my *polenta*, and similar dishes for myself by the fire, and I lived and looked like a savage. I would not have my hair combed or be dressed, I could not leave my room, but they allowed my friends out of the academy to visit me, so I had still the sight of these faithful companions of the heroic cavalcades. And there I remained like a deaf and dumb boy, crouched down on my mattress without even answering a question. I remained with my eyes fixed on the ground; they were filled with tears, but I let not one fall.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### MY SISTER'S MARRIAGE—RESTORATION TO MY HONOR—FIRST HORSE.

I WAS finally emancipated from this brutal, beastly life, by the marriage of my sister Julia with the Count Giacinto di Cumiana. It took place on the 1st of May, 1764, a day I shall never forget. I accompanied the bridal party to the charming villa of Cumiana, ten miles from Turin, where I passed over a month most delightfully as any one naturally would, who had just emerged from a prison where he had been shut up all winter.

My new brother-in-law obtained my liberty, and I was restored to the simple rights of the first apartment. But I gained equality with my companions at a pretty dear rate; I was at the same time less restricted in my expenditures—no one could

now legally control me. The first use I made of this liberty was to buy a horse, which I took with me to the villa of Cumiana. He was a beautiful Sardinian, with a white mane and marked points, particularly the head, neck and breast. I was deeply attached to him, and never think of him without emotion. My attachment for him went so far as to destroy my peace every time he had the least ailment, as he often had, for he was fiery and delicate. I could neither eat nor sleep, but when I mounted him my love for him did not prevent me from fretting and chafing him whenever he did not wish to go my way. The delicacy of this precious animal furnished me a good pretext for getting another, and after that a span for the carriage, one for a gig, and two others for the saddle, so that in less than a year I got up as high as eight, amidst the groans of the penurious curator, whom I left to sing such tunes as he liked best.

Having now passed the bounds prescribed by the parsimony of my curator, I became rather prodigal, particularly in dress. Some of my English comrades were extravagant, and not wishing to be outdone, I even outstripped them. But I was on more intimate terms with my friends out of the academy. Many of them belonged to the most respectable families in Turin, yet being still subject to their fathers, they were necessarily somewhat restricted in their expenses. In my intercourse with them, I will frankly say, that I practised a virtue which I discovered was a part of my unconquerable nature. I would not allow myself to outdo any one, who considered himself my inferior in physical strength, genius, generosity of character, or purse. Every time I got a new dress of a costly description, either of embroidery or lace or furs, to go to court or to dine with my companions, who rivalled me in these vanities, I threw it off immediately after dinner, when they made their calls, and put it out of sight, and I was ashamed to think I had these dresses—it seemed criminal to me to have, and above all, to make a display of anything not possessed by my friends and equals. For this reason, although, after many struggles, I had wrung a beautiful carriage from my curator; useless and ridiculous as the thing was for a stripling of sixteen, in a little microscopic



city like Turin, I seldom rode in it, for my friends were obliged to make their appearance on foot. I was pardoned for my stud of saddle-horses, for they were always at their service, and besides they had each a saddle-horse of their own. This branch of luxury thus became a source of more pleasure to me than all the rest, for it did not wound the delicacy of my friends.

Having examined dispassionately and with love for the truth this period of my youth, I think I see through so many crooked things at this fervid, idle, uneducated, and unbridled age, a natural tendency to justice, to equality, and to generosity of soul, which constitute the elements of a being free or at least worthy of being so.

---

## CHAPTER X.

### FIRST LOVE AFFAIR—FIRST EXCURSION—ENTRANCE INTO THE ARMY.

(1765.) DURING a *villeggiatura*\* of a month I passed in the family of two brothers, who were my particular friends and riding companions, I fell for the first time under the power of love. The enchantress was one of their sisters-in-law, the wife of their eldest brother. This Signorina was a vivacious, coquetish brunette. This passion which I experienced afterwards for others so long under all its vicissitudes, made itself known by the following symptoms. I felt a deep and malignant melancholy—I sought the loved object, and yet scarcely was she found, before I flew from her again; I knew not what to say to her, if by chance I found myself with her a few moments, I will not say alone, for she was too closely watched ever to allow of this—but apart by herself. After our return from the villa, I spent whole days in racing through every angle and corner of the city, and in the public promenades of Valentino and Cittadella, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. I could not

---

\* The Italian word for the life of the country villa.



listen to her name or call it myself—and in a single word, I experienced more than all the passions so inimitably drawn by our divine Master of Love, Petrarch—Passions which few comprehend, and fewer still experience; but to these few alone is it granted to soar above the vulgar crowd.

This my first flame, although it was attended by no serious consequences, burned for a long time in my heart, and in all my subsequent wanderings there silently attended me as the guide of all my undertakings, something which seemed like a voice speaking in the secret of my soul, to say, “If you acquire this or that object you will be able, on your return, better to accomplish your desire, and in the changes time brings you may yet turn this shadow into a substance.”

In the autumn of 1765, I made a trip with my curator to Genoa, and it was the first time I had left my native State. The sight of the sea ravished my soul, and I never could satisfy myself with gazing on it. The magnificent and picturesque site of that superb city inflamed my fancy, and had I then known any language well and had some of the poets at hand, I should certainly have written verses. But for two years I had rarely opened a book, except some of the French romances and the delightful prose of Voltaire.

On my way to Genoa I had the pleasure of seeing my mother and native city once more; I had been gone seven years, which at that period seemed so many centuries. After getting back from Genoa, I thought I had achieved some great exploit. But however much I secretly prided myself over my friends out of the academy, I never boasted of it to my companions within, but alluded to it as a small affair. I knew they would esteem it such; for they had all come from distant countries, being English, Germans, Poles, Russians, etc. But this gave me a crazy passion for travelling, and seeing all their countries.

(1766.) In idleness and dissipation the last eighteen months of my first apartment passed quickly away. When I entered the academy, I had inscribed my name in the list of applicants for the army. After three years I was included in a general promotion of perhaps one hundred and fifty others. My military ardor had cooled off very much to be sure, but as I had

not withdrawn my application, I had to accept an ensign's commission in the provincial regiment of Asti. I had applied for admission into the cavalry, for I was fond of horses—but I afterwards chose a provincial regiment, which in time of peace would for a few days only call me to my post once or twice a year, thus leaving me greater liberty and nothing at all to do, which happened to be the very thing I was bent upon. But this military life of only a few days disgusted me, and besides it obliged me to leave the academy where I was contented now to remain.

In the following May, then, I left the academy where I had been nearly eight years. In September I attended the first review of my regiment at Asti, where I performed every duty of my little station with the greatest exactness and reluctance—for I could not bow to the yoke of subordination, which, although it be the soul of military discipline, could never be the soul of a future tragic poet. When I left the academy, I hired a small but pleasant apartment, in the house with my sister, and spent a good deal of money for horses and superfluities of every kind, in giving dinners to my friends and old companions of the academy.

The mania for travelling increased upon me immeasurably by continual intercourse with these foreigners, and I was induced against my natural disposition to weave up a plot to get leave of absence for travelling to Rome and Naples for at least a year. And as it was perfectly certain that at the age of seventeen I should not be allowed to go alone, I agreed with an English tutor (a Catholic), who was to accompany a Fleming and Hollander in this expedition, and with whom I had passed more than a year in the academy, to allow me to join the company. I arranged everything with the parties, and availed myself of my brother-in-law's service to obtain from the king liberty of travelling under the supervision of this Englishman, who was a man well advanced in life, and of an excellent reputation. We fixed upon the first of October of the same year, for our departure.

This was the first plot I ever was guilty of, but in no other way could I win over the tutor, my brother-in-law, and above

all the stingy curator. The thing was finally accomplished, but I was ashamed and chagrined at all the turnings, simulations and dissimulations, I had to resort to, to insure success. The king, who, in our little country, meddles in every little affair, had no idea of his nobles travelling abroad, and much less a boy who had scarcely left his nest, and who had shown he had his own way of thinking. I was obliged, in a single word, to bow down pretty low—but thanks to my good fortune, this did not hinder me afterwards from rising up again.

I shall here bring this Second Epoch to a close ; I am well aware I have made it even more insipid in its details than the First. But the reader had better spend little time on it or skip it entirely—for to bring the whole thing into two words these eight years of my Childhood were made up of Sickness, Idleness and Ignorance.

# PERIOD THIRD.

---

## YOUTH,

### EMBRACING TEN YEARS OF TRAVELLING AND DISSIPATION.

---

#### CHAPTER I.

##### FIRST JOURNEY—MILAN, FLORENCE, ROME.

(1766.) ON the morning of the 4th of October, 1766, after passing the whole night in gay fancies without shutting my eyes, with indescribable transport I set out on this longed-for journey. We made a carriage load of four gentlemen with two servants on the box, and a coach with two others behind us, while my valet rode on horseback as a courier. But the latter was by no means that old fellow who had acted as my aid three years before; I had left him in Turin. Francesco Elia, my new servant, had been nearly twenty years with my uncle, and after his death in Sardinia had entered my service. He had already attended my uncle twice to Sardinia and in his travels through France, England, and Holland. He was a shrewd and uncommonly active man; and as he was worth more than all the other four servants taken in a batch, he may henceforth be considered the presiding hero of my comedy of travels. He soon became our only pilot, for the rest of us were all either babies or old dotards.

Our first stop was at Milan, where we stayed fifteen days. I

had already visited Genoa. I was familiar with the beautiful site of Turin, and the Milanese scenery could not be expected to please me. Those things I ought to have seen I glanced at hastily, or did not see at all, for I was utterly ignorant and insensible to every beautiful art. I remember that the librarian of the Ambrosian Library put into my hand a Manuscript of Petrarch, and I, like a barbarian, threw it down, saying, *I cared nothing about it*. I owed that Petrarch a certain grudge; for some years before when I was a philosopher, a copy of his works happening to fall into my hands, I opened it at random, and spelled out a few verses I did not understand. In disgust I condemned the great Author, joining in the chorus of the French and other presumptuous pretenders, and pronounced him a tiresome punster and a retailer of stale things, and this was the way I now treated his invaluable Manuscripts. Besides, I had set out on a year's journey with no books but some travels in Italy; and even these were in French. So rapidly was I now bringing my advanced barbarism to perfection! With my companions I always conversed in French. French was spoken in every Milanese family where we visited. Any stray thought or reflection that entered my stupid brain was clothed in French; even my letters were in French, and some ridiculous notes of the journey I scribbled on the way were also in French, and of a doubtful idiom too, for all I knew of the miserable language I had got by chance; I was ignorant of every principle of the tongue. Of Italian I knew still less, and was daily reaping the fruit of being born in an amphibious country where I received so ludicrous an education.\*

---

\* It is so still in Piedmont. The upper classes speak neither good French nor Italian, and the common people a *patois*, which is, perhaps, one of the most barbarous in Europe. The traveller who expects to hear "the soft accents of the Tuscan tongue" when he descends from the Alps into the beautiful vales of Piedmont, will be wofully disappointed. Indeed there is little good Italian spoken in Italy except in Tuscany and Rome.



After a visit of two weeks we left Milan. The silly journal I kept, I had the good sense soon after to burn. I will not recapitulate many of the incidents of these puerile travels. They were through countries already well known. I shall pass rapidly over the different cities I went through like an insensible Vandal, and go on speaking of myself, for how unhappy the theme may be, it is the one I have chosen for this work.

*Via* Piacenza, Parma, and Modena, in a few days we reached Bologna. We stopped at Parma only a day, and Modena but a few hours, and of course I saw nothing worth seeing as I ought to have done. In fact, the only pleasure I had in this journey was in dashing furiously along the roads, occasionally mounting my servant's horse to play the courier. Bologna with its porticos, monks, and pictures, seemed unworthy of my attention. I was urged by a restless impatience I could not control, and I spurred the poor old tutor to hurry on to the end of the journey.

We reached Florence towards the close of October. It was the first city that pleased me after leaving Turin, and I even liked Florence less than Genoa. We remained there a month. Forced by the fame of the place, I paid hurried visits to the Gallery and Palace of Pitti and several of the Churches, but all with a feeling of disgust. I had no appreciation of the beautiful, especially in painting, and my eyes had only a dull perception of colors. Sculpture pleased me somewhat, and Architecture still more. This I owed, perhaps, to the influence of my uncle the architect. The tomb of Michael Angelo, in the church of Santa Croce, was one of the few things that arrested my attention. I recalled the memory of this illustrious man, and I was struck with the thought that none become truly great except those who leave some enduring monument behind them. But one such reflection isolated in the midst of that immense dissipation of mind in which I lived, was only as a drop of water to the sea.

Among so many juvenile follies of which I shall eternally be ashamed, I will not enumerate as the *least* certainly, the giving up my time for a month in Florence to a pedagogue to try to learn English instead of learning from the living Tuscans

to speak at least, without barbarism, in their divine tongue. I mangled it so wretchedly that through sheer shame I avoided taking an Italian word on my tongue. But shame was not so strong as my repugnance to study. I was, however, broken of the horrible Lombard and French *u*. It had always disgusted me, for it brings a grimace upon the face like that of a monkey trying to talk. And although I have been in France more than five years, and my ears are absolutely lined with it, yet it makes me laugh every time I hear it, especially at the theatre where one is reminded (particularly in the word *nature*), of a person contracting his lips to blow hot soup.

This was the way I lived at Florence, wasting my time, seeing little, and learning less, till I got tired out. I succeeded in teasing our old Mentor to set out on the first of December for Lucca, *via* Prato and Pistoia. One day in Lucca seemed a century, and we went on to Pisa. I was struck with its Campo Santo, but a whole day there seemed too long, and on we pushed to Leghorn. This city I liked for it resembles Turin, and stands on the sea which I could gaze on for ever. Here we stayed eight or ten days, and I barbarously went on mangling English, while to the Tuscan I was deaf and dumb. In speculating afterwards on the cause of this stupid preference, I found I was unconsciously influenced by a false self-love. For more than two years I had lived with the English; I had everywhere heard of the magnificence and wealth of their nation; I saw for myself the grand political influence of England on the one hand, and on the other Italy all dead, the Italians divided, enfeebled, discouraged, enslaved, and I felt deeply ashamed of being or appearing to be an Italian, and I wished neither to practise nor to know *any of their things*.\*

From Leghorn we went to Siena, and here although the site of this city is not very pleasing, yet such is the power of the beautiful and the true I felt for once that a bright ray had shot

---

\*In the original, "*nulla della cose loro*" loses much in the translation. Alfieri often uses it—generally in contempt, and to an Italian it is full of meaning.

into my soul, and the sweetest harmony (*lusigna*, literally flattery) fallen on my ears and heart, when I heard the lowest classes speaking with so much sweetness, elegance, propriety, and brevity. But we stayed only a day—the time of my literary and political regeneration was yet a great way off. It was necessary for me to abandon Italy for a long time, to know and appreciate the Italians.

At length with a beating heart I turned my face towards Rome. At night I could not sleep, and all day I was thinking to myself of St. Peter's, the Coliseum, and the Pantheon I had heard so much of before. In my boyhood I had never read any history but that of Rome, and its bright scrolls were now floating confusedly over my recollection. At last, in the month of December, 1766, I saw the longed-for Gate of the People. The wretchedness and misery of the country from Viterbo was all atoned for by that superb entrance, which stirred all my feelings. We entered the city, and stopped in the "*Piazza di Spagna*," where we were to lodge. Instantly I and my two companions abandoned the tutor to his repose, and went running about the city for the rest of the day, taking the Pantheon in our way. My companions were even more astonished than myself at what we saw. Some years after I visited their countries, and then I was able easily to account for it.

We stayed only eight days in Rome, but every moment was spent in running about to quench that first impatient curiosity. As for myself I chose rather to visit St. Peter's twice a day than to see new things. That admirable union of sublime objects did not strike me at first as I had expected, but my admiration was continually increasing. But I neither understood nor appreciated that great City in all its grandeur till many years after, when, tired out with tawdry magnificence beyond the Alps, I came back to live in Rome.

## CHAPTER II.

## CONTINUATION OF MY TRAVELS—LIBERATION FROM THE TUTOR.

THE approaching winter now spurred us all on, and I spurred on still more the tardy tutor to set out for Naples, where we intended to pass the entire Carnival. We travelled by vettura, for the roads from Rome to Naples were almost impassable, and Elia had fallen from his horse at Radicofani and broken an arm, which obliged him to ride in our carriage, although he suffered severely by its motion. He had displayed much presence of mind and real fortitude in that accident, for he got up by himself, took his horse by the rein, and set out on foot alone to Radicofani, more than a mile off. There he called a surgeon, and while waiting for him he tore off his coat sleeve and examined his arm. Finding it broken, he held it as firmly as he could, and with the other hand set it so perfectly that the surgeon, who happened to come in just as we arrived with the carriage, did nothing but bind it up, and in less than an hour we were again on the road with the maimed man disposed in a corner of the carriage. His countenance was firm and unwavering, but he suffered intensely.

At Acquipendente we found the reach of our carriage broken. This made all of us except Elia very impatient, but with his arm in a sling only three hours after the fracture, he was more active and efficient than the whole company in working, and he finally repaired the beam so well that in less than two hours we set off again, and without further accident reached Rome.

The record of this adventure has afforded me pleasure, as it illustrates a characteristic of a man of courage and presence of mind infinitely superior to his station. I find no greater satisfaction than in praising those simple virtues which ought to make us weep over the bad governments which slight, or fear, or suppress them.

We reached Naples the second Christmas holiday, and the



weather was like spring. The entrance by the "*Capo di China*," by the "*Studi e Toldo*," gave us a sight of the most grand and beautiful city I had ever seen, and its recollection I shall never forget. But I was treated to quite a different prospect at my quarters in a tavern, which stood in one of the dark and filthy lanes of the city, for here we were driven by necessity, as every good hotel was crowded with foreigners. This misfortune greatly embittered my visit to Naples, for a pleasant or disagreeable location has always had an irresistible influence upon my weak brain, even till my more advanced age.

In a few days our minister introduced me to several families. Not only the public spectacles, but the numerous private balls and fêtes, with all their variety of luxurious diversions, made this Carnival far more brilliant and delightful than any I had ever passed at Turin. But yet, in the midst of that new and continual diversion, entirely free, with money enough, only eighteen, and a prepossessing figure, I was a victim to satiety, weariness and pain. My chief pleasure was the opera buffa of the new theatre. But even these operas, however fascinating at the time, always left in my mind a long train of melancholy feelings, and awakened thousands of the most gloomy and dreary fancies, which I gave myself up to in my solitary walks along the rumbling shores of "*Chiaia e di Portici*." I had made the acquaintance of several young Neapolitans, but my reserved nature prevented me from cultivating any intimacy, and carrying the face of a recluse had prevented others from approaching me. I felt a predilection for female society, but as none but chaste women pleased me, and I was courted only by the impudent, I kept my heart free. Besides the ardent wish I had long cherished of travelling in transalpine countries, led me to shun the dangers of love, so that in this first journey I kept safe from every snare. I spent nearly all my time in running about in those pleasant little carriages, hunting up the most out-of-the-way objects, and not for seeing them either, for I had no curiosity for anything, and understood nothing but racing over the roads, and although going never satisfied me, yet I could never keep still,



On being presented at court, I found King Ferdinand IV., who was about fifteen or sixteen years old, looking just like the other three sovereigns I had then seen, who were my excellent King Carlo Emanuele, a venerable old man, the Duke of Modena, Governor of Milan, and Leopold, the Grand Duke of Tuscany himself, also very young. I now discovered very clearly that among all the princes there is only one face, and all their courts are only the same antechamber. During my stay at Naples I availed myself of the influence of the Sardinian Minister for obtaining permission to leave my tutor and continue my journey alone. We lived in perfect harmony, and the tutor was kind to us all, yet in all our trips from one city to another we were obliged to combine our movements to accommodate each other, and as the old man was always irresolute, changeable, and tardy, that dependence became very irksome. I was obliged once more to bow and pray the minister to write in my favor to Turin, and give testimony of my good conduct and entire capacity to take care of myself and travel alone. The affair succeeded to my entire satisfaction, and I felt grateful to the minister. He had also taken a fancy to me, and was the first to put it into my head that I ought to devote myself to the study of Political Economy, and enter the lists of Diplomacy. The idea pleased me, and I then thought that *kind* of servitude would be of all sorts the least servile, and I kept *thinking* about it without however *studying* any! I said nothing about it to any one, and contented myself with maintaining a quiet and dignified deportment, superior perhaps to my years. But in this I was guided rather by my nature than my will. I have always been grave in my address, without affectation, and even in my disorder I have maintained a system. When I have blundered, too, I have done it with my eyes open. But I was in the meantime unknown to myself. I felt incapable of everything—had no decided impulse for anything but perpetual melancholy—found no peace or repose. Indeed I knew not what I wanted. I blindly obeyed a nature I neither knew nor studied, and it was only many years after that I discovered my unhappiness consisted in the want, nay the necessity of having at the same time my

heart occupied by a worthy love, and my mind by some noble work. For whenever I have lacked either of these two things I have found myself incapable of the other, and I have remained satiated and filled with chagrin.

But I was impatient to use my newly gained independence, and I determined to set out for Rome as soon as the Carnival was over, for the old man said he expected letters from Rome, and would not fix the time of his departure. I was impatient to leave Naples to see Rome again, or, to tell the truth, to be once more master of myself, on a highroad more than three hundred miles away from my native prison. I refused any longer delay, and abandoned my companions; and well I did, for they stayed in Naples till the end of April, and were too late for the Ascension, at Venice, which I was most anxious to see.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### CONTINUATION OF MY TRAVELS—FIRST FIT OF AVARICE.

HAVING reached Rome before my faithful Elia, I took my lodgings at the foot of the steps of *Trinita de' Monti*, a neat, gay quarter, which made up for the filth of Naples. The same dissipation, the same disquiet, the same melancholy, the same mania for pushing on my journey, haunted me still. And, worse than all, I carried with me the very same ignorance of everything most disgraceful not to know, and every day my insensibility increased for all those beautiful and magnificent objects in which Rome abounds, if I except four or five of its principal attractions, which I always returned to see. I went out every day with the Count of Rivera, Minister of Sardinia. He was a most worthy old man, and although deaf, was never tiresome, and he gave me many wise and luminous counsels. One day I happened to find lying on his table a beautiful copy of Virgil, in folio, opened at the 6th Book of the

*Æneid*. When I entered, the good old man beckoned me near him, and began reading aloud with enthusiasm those beautiful verses on Marcellus, so familiar to every one. But I, who had translated and known them by heart six years before, could now scarcely understand them, and I was so deeply mortified and vexed, that for many days I revolved my shame to myself and went no more to see the Count. But the rust on my intellect had become so deeply crusted, and was so rapidly increasing from day to day, that a much sharper chisel than a transient mortification was needed to cut it away, and that hallowed shame passed and left no trace behind it. I read Virgil no more, nor any other good book in any language, for several years.

During this second visit to Rome, I was presented to the Pope, who was then Clement XIII. The venerable majesty of this hale old man, joined to the magnificent sight of the Palace of Montecavallo, so affected me, that the usual prostration and kissing of the foot caused me no disagreeable feelings. And yet I had read ecclesiastical history, and was aware of the exact value of that foot!

Through means of the Count Rivera, I laid and succeeded in my third plot, at the paternal court of Turin; obtaining permission for a second year of travelling, in which I designed to visit France, England, and Holland—names which sounded wonder and delight to my inexperienced years. My third plot succeeded, and I found myself at full liberty for the year 1768 to roam the world. But a trifling difficulty came up which vexed me for a long time. With my curator I had never kept an account; he had given me no clear idea of the state of my affairs. Sometimes he had sent me money, and at other times refused. When I obtained this new permission, he wrote to me that for the second year I should have letters of credit forwarded for 1500 sequins, only 300 more than I had for my first journey. This intimation disturbed me exceedingly, but I was not discouraged. I had always heard a great deal said about the enormous expense of the countries beyond the mountains, and I was afraid I should find myself unprovided for, and be forced to make but a sorry figure. On the other hand,

I took a good care what I wrote to the penurious curator, otherwise I should soon have had him against me, and he would then have cried out "*the king*," a word which at Turin, in all our little domestic affairs, is continually intruding itself among the nobles. It would have been easy for him to represent me as wilful and profligate, and cause me to be immediately recalled. So I made no quarrel with him, but I determined to spend in the first journey as little as possible of my 1200 sequins already granted, to increase the 1500 promised, for this seemed a very scanty sum for a year of travel beyond the Alps. I was now restricted, for the first time, in my means of expenditure, ample as they had hitherto been, and in a moment I became the victim of a sordid avarice. I avoided any amusement in Rome which cost money, and even refused my faithful Elia the payment of his wages and the cost of his living; till things got to such a pass, he protested I should force him to rob me for his bread. I then very reluctantly gave him a little money.

With a soul contracted by this scheme of avarice, I set out on the first of May for Venice. Like a poor man, I took a vettura, though I abhorred their mule gait. But the difference in the expense was so great, I put up with it, and went off cursing. I left Elia in the vettura with the servant, and set out on a starved mule, which stumbled every third step. The journey I made chiefly on foot, reckoning on my fingers, as I went along, the cost of ten or twelve days on the road, of a month's stay in Venice, how much I should have left when I set out from Italy, and what would be the cost of this and of that; and thus I went on, bothering my heart and brain with all such filthiness. The Vetturino was to take me to Bologna, *via* Loretto; but when I reached the latter city, my avarice was effectually overcome by my ardor and impatience. The scales suddenly shifted; I paid off the Vetturino the sum bargained for the whole journey, and posted on to Bologna, cured of my parsimony. I afterwards practised economy without stinginess.

Bologna pleased me even less than on my first visit. The shrine of Loretto inspired me with no devotion, and I longed



for nothing but Venice, of which I had heard so many marvels from my boyhood. After a day at Bologna I passed on to Ferrara, which I went through on the jump, without remembering it was the birth-place and the tomb of the divine Ariosto, whose poems (the first that had ever fallen into my hands), I had read with so much pleasure. But my poor intellect was steeped in the profoundest sleep, and every day being covered with a deeper rust. But in a knowledge of the world and of men I was unconsciously making some progress, from the shifting scenes of my changing life. At the bridge of Lagoscuro I took the Venice courier-boat, and found myself in the company of some dancing-girls of the theatre, one of whom was very beautiful. But the voyage, which lasted two days and one night, to Chiozza, was none the less tedious for all that, for these nymphs played off the Susannah, and I could never tolerate an affected virtue.

At last I reached Venice. For a few days the novelty of the city filled me with wonder, and I was delighted even with the jargon of the people, for I had been familiar with the comedies of Goldoni from boyhood, and in fact the Venetian dialect is pleasing, and only wants majesty. The crowds of foreigners, the number of theatres, and the numerous fêtes and entertainments (besides those usually given at every fair of Ascension) which were made that year to the Duke of Wirtemberg, and among others the sumptuous regatta, all held me in Venice till the middle of June, although they did not keep me contented. My usual melancholy, my restlessness and vexation at keeping still began once more their cruel bites, which embittered all the pleasure the novelty of the scenes around me were calculated to awaken. I passed many days entirely alone, without going out of the house; doing nothing but stand at the window to catch glances and hold short dialogues with a Signorina who lodged opposite. The rest of the long day I passed either sleeping or ruminating on I know not what, and very often weeping—I know not why, without finding peace, or investigating, or even speculating on the cause of my sadness. Many years after I became convinced this was a periodical attack I suffer every spring, between April and June, more or less last-



ing and severe, as my mind and heart are more or less vacant. I afterwards observed too, that my mind was an excellent barometer, for my genius and capacity for composing depended on the weight of the air. A total stupidity always comes over me in the equinoctial and solstitial seasons. I have infinitely less clearness of intellect in the evening than in the morning, and far more fancy, enthusiasm and power of invention in mid-winter and mid-summer than any other period. This susceptibility, more or less common, I believe, to all men of nervous temperament, has destroyed much of the pride I may have sometimes had in the little I have done well, while it has diminished the shame I should have otherwise felt in so much more that I have certainly done badly, particularly in my own art, for I am perfectly convinced that at these different times I could not have done otherwise.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### FINISH MY TRAVELS IN ITALY—ARRIVE AT PARIS.

My visit to Venice was on the whole a source of little satisfaction and less utility—I was spurred on by an anxiety to cross the Alps, and I saw not even a tenth part of the wonders of painting, architecture and sculpture clustered in that city. To my infinite shame I not even saw the Arsenal. I gave not the slightest attention to the great features of that government, which differs from all others, for if it be not a perfect it is a strange structure, existing as it has for so many centuries, with so much lustre and prosperity. Insensible to every beautiful art I disgracefully *vegetated*—nothing more. At last I left Venice with a thousand times more pleasure, as usual, than I entered it. I was disgusted with Padua as soon as I arrived, and formed no acquaintance with any of its many distinguished professors, whom I so much desired to know in after years—nay, at that time I heard with a shudder even the very names

professor, study, university. I did not remember, nor did I know that a few miles from Padua the bones of our second great luminary, Petrarch, reposed, and what cared I for him. I who had never read him, nor understood nor felt his power, for I had only taken him up to throw him down—I knew nothing about his writings. Filled with *ennui* and impatience, I raced on in fury through Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, Milan, till I reached Genoa, which I had seen on the run two years before, and longed to see again. I carried letters of introduction for most of those places, but seldom delivered them, and when I did I saw none but those who called and insisted on seeing me—which they were never bound to do. This savage kind of life was occasioned in part by the wildness and inflexibility of uneducated character, and in part by a natural and almost unconquerable repugnance to see new faces; and yet how could I be always changing countries without changing acquaintances? I would have liked always to have had the same companions, but eternally shifting place.

There was no Sardinian minister at Genoa, and knowing no person but my banker I soon got tired. I had prepared to leave the first of June, but one day this banker, who was quite a man of the world, called on me and finding me thus solitary, savage and melancholy, asked how I passed my time without books or acquaintances, and with no occupation but to stand on the balcony, or race through the streets, or sail along the shores in a pleasure-boat, and conceiving, perhaps, some compassion for me and my youth, he wished to take me to the house of one of his friends, the Cavalier Carlo Negrone. He had passed a great part of his life in Paris, and finding me so set upon going there he told me the real truth about that city, but I did not credit it till some months after. This polite nobleman introduced me to the first families, and at the splendid banquet given to the new Doge he served as my chaperon. There I nearly fell in love with a *gentil Signora* who smiled very gracefully on me. But a mania for roving the world and abandoning Italy broke the power of the charmer at the time, but I received his dart not long after. I finally left by sea in a felucca for Antibio, and it seemed to me

I was going to the Indies. I had never been but a few miles from the coast; but a favorable wind springing up we pushed out some distance to sea, and by degrees it increased to such a gale we were obliged, to avoid danger, to put into the port of Savona and wait two days for good weather. This detention annoyed so exceedingly I never left the house even to visit the celebrated Madonna of Savona; I wanted neither to see nor hear anything more of Italy; and every moment of detention seemed a robbery of the pleasures I was to enjoy in France. All this was the fruit of an unrestrained fancy which always exaggerated all the good and all the evil of the future, so that both, particularly the former, seemed nothing when I experienced it.

In landing at Antibo, it was a comfort to hear another language, to see other customs, other buildings, and new faces; and although these objects were all inferior to what I had left, yet they afforded me relief by their novelty. I immediately left for Toulon. This city I didn't like, and I shot through it in my rush to Marseilles, whose cheerful aspect, new, well laid out, clean streets, beautiful *corso*, beautiful harbor, graceful, lively women, all delighted me so much, I determined to stop a month, to escape the inconvenience of travelling in the excessive heat of July. In my hotel there was a *table d'Hôte*, where I found company at dinner and supper, without being obliged to talk myself (something which always costs me an effort). And besides, my taciturnity, springing from a bashfulness I never could overcome, was redoubled by the incessant garrulity of French officers and merchants, of whom I found there every species. I contracted no friendship or familiarity with any of them, but I listened very willingly, although I could learn nothing; but to listen never cost me an effort. I could tolerate even the conversations of fools, from whom we learn what they tell us not.

One reason why I had always wanted to go to France was to become familiar with their drama. I had, two years before, heard a company of French Comedians all one summer, which made me familiar with many of their principal tragedies, and nearly all their most celebrated comedies. I owe it to truth,

however, to say, that neither at Turin nor in France, during my first or my second tour, two years after, did the idea occur to me that I should ever write a dramatic composition. I listened to the performances of others without the faintest intention or impulse to write myself. On the whole, Comedy charmed me far more than Tragedy, although by nature I was more inclined to tears than smiles. But subsequent reflection satisfied me that my indifference, at this period, for Tragedy, was owing to there being, in nearly all the French tragedies, some entire scenes, and often entire acts, made up of secondary characters; this damped my feelings, for it spun out unmercifully the thread of the story, or, to speak more properly, broke it up. Besides, although I did not wish to be Italian, my ears, in spite of myself, were sensitive to the tiresome and stupid monotony of versifying by couplets and hemistichs, with their triviality of manner and disgusting nasal sounds. Their actors were excellent in comparison with our villainous ones, and generally very well adapted their recitations to the effect of the action and the thought; yet, although I could not tell why, I felt all my enthusiasm occasionally expire, and I went away without much satisfaction. The tragedies I liked best were "*La Phédre*," "*L'Alzine*," "*Le Mahomet*," and a few others.

Another of my daily diversions at Marseilles was bathing at evening in the sea. I found a delightful place on a point of land on the right of the harbor, where, seated in the sand, with my back against a rock that rose so far behind me as to cut off all sight from the shore on all sides, I could see nothing but the sky and the sea, and thus, between those two immensities, made gorgeous by the rays of the sun, I passed an hour in delicious reveries. Here, too, I should have written rhymes by the quantity, had I known how to write, in any language, either prose or verse.

But I got tired of my sojourn in Marseilles, for everything soon becomes wearisome to the indolent, and I was spurred on more furiously than ever to reach Paris. I left the 10th of August, and, more like a fugitive than a traveller, I pressed on night and day, without stopping till I reached Lyons. Aix,

with its magnificent and cheerful walks; Avignon, once the Papal See, and the tomb of the beautiful Laura; Vaucluse, so long the home of the divine Petrarch, nothing could stop me in my thunderbolt rush to Paris. In Lyons my fatigue arrested me for two nights and one day, but setting out again with the same hot haste, less than three days, by the way of Bourgogne, brought me to Paris.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### FIRST SOJOURN IN PARIS.

On a cold, cloudy, rainy morning of a day I have forgotten, between the 15th and 20th of August, I entered Paris through the squalid suburb of St. Marcellus. I had exchanged the beautiful skies of Italy and Provence for this dreadful climate. When I entered the vile suburb of St. Germaine, where I had taken lodgings, it seemed I was going into a filthy sepulchre, and I never, in all my life, was overshadowed by a more sepulchral feeling. Why had I passed through such anxiety, wild illusions of heated fancy, to plunge myself into that fetid sink? In getting out at the hotel, I thought I found myself *completely* undeceived; and had it not been for my fatigue and the disgrace of doing it, I should immediately have abandoned Paris. But it was only when I began to wander around the city that the work was done. The contemptible barbarity of the buildings; the miserable ostentation of a few houses they pretend are palaces; the sluttishness and Gothicism of the churches; the Vandalic architecture of the theatres *then* standing, and the objects without end, disgusting and disagreeable, that all day were falling under my eye, and beyond measure the most intolerable of all, the bedaubed faces of ugly women, were unatoned for by the beauty and variety of the gardens, the elegance of public walks, the good taste and number of beautiful



carriages, the lofty façade of the Louvre, and other pleasing objects of this description.

In the meantime, the bad weather hung on with terrible obstinacy, and although I had now been fifteen days in Paris, in the month of August, I had not yet caught a glimpse of the sun; and my feelings, decidedly more poetical than philosophical, were always not a little susceptible to the influence of the weather. This first impression of Paris was so lasting, that even till this day (twenty-three years after) it lives in my fancy, though I have tried to shake it off.

The court was at Compiegne, and would be till the end of September. The Sardinian Minister, to whom I had letters, was out of town, and I knew not a soul except some foreigners I had met in Italy, and they were acquainted with hardly a *respectable* person in Paris. I passed my time among the walks, the theatres, *le ragazze di mondo*, and with my own perpetually depressed spirit. In this manner things went on till the end of November, when our ambassador returned from Fontainebleau to live in town. He introduced me to several families, particularly of the foreign ministers. At the house of the Spanish ambassador there was a faro table, and for the first time I began to play. I lost little and won less, of course, and soon got tired of it, as well as of any other pastime, and determined to leave in January for London. I knew little of Paris except the streets, but I was, on the whole, a good deal cured of my racing mania, for I not only found everything immensely inferior to my anticipations, but decidedly inferior to the same objects I had seen in Italy. But nothing but a residence in London taught me to appreciate Rome, Venice, Naples, and Florence.

(1768.) Before I set out for London the ambassador proposed to present me at court at Versailles, and I accepted, for I had some curiosity to see the most brilliant court in Europe, that I might be entirely undeceived upon everything. It was New Year's day of 1768, the most interesting occasion in the year. Although I was aware the king never conversed with common foreigners, and such a privation might be of little consequence to me, yet I could not swallow the Jove-like

behavior of that monarch. Louis XV. inspected every man presented to him from head to foot, but never gave a sign of receiving any impression whatever. If on presenting an ant to a giant, one should say, "Behold I present you an ant, Monsieur," one would expect that the giant would at least look at it, and either smile, or perhaps say, "Oh ! what a very *petite animal*," or if he chose to keep silence, let his countenance speak for him. But that disdainful look did not affect me very seriously, for a few moments after, I saw his majesty was wasting the same eye-sight on others much more important than myself.

After muttering a short prayer between two of his prelates, one of whom, if I remember right, was a cardinal, the king started for the chapel. Near the door he was met by the Chief of the Municipality of Paris, who mumbled out a compliment in use New Year's day. The taciturn sire answered him with a slight inclination of the head, and turning to one of his courtiers, inquired where *les Echevins* (the magistrates usually attendant on the Provost) had stopped. A courtier's voice, sounding out above the crowd, facetiously replied—" *Ils sont restés embourbés*" (they have stuck fast in the mud). The whole court laughed, and even the monarch himself simpered, and passed on to the mass.

Inconstant fortune decreed that in a little more than twenty years I should see in Paris, in the palace of the city, another Louis king receive very much more benignantly another very different compliment from another *Provost*, under the title of *Maire*, on the 17th of July, 1789, and then the courtiers themselves, in coming from Versailles to Paris, had remained *embourbés*, although it was in mid-summer, *but roads round Paris were in a sad state at that time !* And I should praise God for having seen such a sight, did I not fear, and believe too well, that the works and influence of these plebeian kings would be still more fatal to France and the world, than those of the Capet race.\*

---

\* Alfieri was a stern republican, but much as he hated tyranny, he never recovered from his inveterate prejudice against the French.

## CHAPTER VI.

## JOURNEY TO ENGLAND AND HOLLAND—FIRST LOVE INTRIGUE.

I LEFT Paris in the middle of January with a fellow-countryman. He was a young cavalier of fine address, and some ten years older than I. He was gifted with some genius, but ignorant as I, less reflective, and more a lover of the gay world than a knower or student of men. He was cousin to our ambassador at Paris, and nephew of the Prince Masserano, then ambassador of Spain at London, and in whose house he expected to lodge. I was not very fond of binding myself to companions, yet we were both going to the same place, and I willingly consented. He was lively and loquacious, and with reciprocal satisfaction I held my tongue, and listened while he talked and boasted. He recounted all his triumphs with the women with great pomp and satisfaction, while I listened without the slightest envy. Evenings at the hotels, while waiting for supper, we played chess, and he always beat me, for during my whole life I have been a dull gamester. We made a long route through *Lisle*, *Douai*, *St. Omère*, in getting to *Calais*, and the cold was so excessive that in a close carriage, one night, where a candle was kept burning, our bread and wine were frozen; but this excessive cold was very agreeable, for I never liked to do things by halves.

Leaving the coast of France, we landed at Dover, where the cold was diminished one half, and hardly a flake of snow fell in going up to London. Just in proportion as I had been displeased with Paris at first sight, was I delighted with England, and particularly London. The roads, the inns, the houses, the women, the universal prosperity, the life and activity of that Island, the cleanliness and comfort of the houses, although very small, the absence of beggars,\* the constant circulation of

---

\* Even twenty-five years ago Byron remarked of this observation, "He'd probably sing another tune in our times, and one wonders where his eyes were then."

money, and the industry which equally pervades the capital and the provinces ; all these substantial and solid advantages, so peculiar to that free and happy country, enraptured my mind at first sight, and during two subsequent visits I never had occasion to change my opinion. The difference between England and the rest of Europe, in all these aspects of public prosperity, is entirely in her favor, and springs from her excellent government. Although I did not, at that time, study the constitution, the origin of so much prosperity, I understood enough of it to observe and appreciate its good results.

In London a stranger is more easily introduced into society than in Paris. I would not bow myself to overcome this difficulty in Paris, for I would never humble myself where I should receive no advantage. But in London it was not necessary, and I yielded myself up for several months to the vortex of the great world. The courtesy and fatherly affection of Prince Masserano contributed not a little to infringe upon my natural rusticity and stubbornness. This excellent old man was passionately fond of the people of Piedmont, his native country, although his father had removed to Spain. But in less than three months I got tired of routs and balls and suppers, where nothing was learned, and changed my part in the drama. Instead of playing the cavalier in the assemblies, I played the coachman up to the door ; I took out in my carriage, all over London, my beautiful Ganymede, leaving him all the glory of love triumphs. I became so expert in my capacity of coachman, that even from those carriage-jams, so common at *Ranelagh* and the theatres, I came off with honor, without breaking my carriage or hurting my horses. In this way I conducted my amusements for that winter—riding on horseback four or five hours every morning, and driving on the box two or three every evening, without regard to the weather. In April, with my companion, I travelled through several of the most beautiful provinces of England. We visited Portsmouth, Salisbury, Bath, and Bristol, and returned by the way of Oxford to London. The country and everything I saw delighted me more and more every day, and from that time I felt a desire to live always in England. Not that I liked Englishmen indi-



vidually very much (although decidedly more than Frenchmen, being better men), but the situation of the country, its simple customs, its beautiful and modest women and girls, and above all, its liberty made me entirely forget the unpleasantness of the climate, the melancholy that always hoops you up there, and the outrageous cost of living.

On returning from this trip which had set me in motion, I felt again the *mania for going*, and with great impatience I deferred my departure for Holland till the fore part of June. At Harwich I embarked for *Helvoetsluys*, which we reached with a fine wind in twelve hours. Holland, in the summer, is a cheerful and smiling country, but I should have liked it even better had I visited it before England; since its population, wealth, neatness, wise laws, industry, and ceaseless activity, are all on a smaller scale than in England; in fact, after much travelling and observation, the only two European countries I have left with a desire to see again are England and Italy. In the former, art has conquered and transformed nature; in the latter nature has always robustly struggled in a thousand different ways to take vengeance on her often unhappy, and always inoperative governments.

I stayed at the Hague much longer than I intended, and at last fell into the snares of love I had hitherto always escaped. *Una gentil Signorina*, a bride of a year, full of natural charms, modest, beautiful, and ingenuous, captivated my heart. The country is small, with few amusements; and at first I saw her much oftener than I wished, but at last I could not live but in her society. Unconsciously I had been captivated, and I felt that I could never leave the Hague while I lived—it seemed impossible to live without her.

My hard heart once opened to the darts of love, now gave audience to the sweet voice of friendship. My new friend was *Signor Don Jose d' Acunha*, the Portuguese minister at the Hague. With great talent, originality, and culture, he united an inflexible character, a magnanimous heart, and a most ardent and lofty soul. A sympathy for each other's taciturnity mutually attracted us insensibly, and the frankness and ardor of our two souls very soon did the rest. I was now perfectly



happy, and for the first time in my life every desire was gratitude in my friend and my mistress. To my mistress I spoke of my friend, and to my friend I talked about my mistress. I thus enjoyed the most exquisite and incomparable pleasures unknown to my heart before, which had always before been filled with vain and mysterious longings. I shall never forget the sage counsels of my good friend, nor his shrewdness and success in making me ashamed of my stupid, indolent life—of never opening a book—of being so ignorant of all our best Italian poets, and philosophical writers. How often he spoke of the immortal Niccolò Machiavelli, of whom I only knew the name, blinded and distorted by the prejudices of our false teachers who never understood him, if, indeed, they ever saw his works. My friend, D'Acunha, gave me a copy I still preserve, and I afterwards read it thoroughly making my own notes, but this was after *many, many* years.

It was something very strange, but I then felt vividly its truth that I never had an impulse for study, or brilliancy of fancy, or power of action, except when my heart was under the sway of love; for while this passion in some respects interfered with my application, it stimulated me to lofty exertion. For this reason I have never felt so sure of success in any walk of literature, as when I have had some dearly loved object, at whose feet I could lay the tribute of my genius.

But my Holland felicity did not last long. The husband of my mistress was very opulent, and his father had been governor of Batavia. He frequently changed his residence, and having recently purchased a baronial domain in Switzerland, he was going there to pass the autumn. In August he made a trip to Spa with his wife, and as he was not very jealous, I followed them. On their return we came together as far as Maestricht, where I was forced to leave her, for she was going to the villa with her mother, while her husband went on to Switzerland. I was unacquainted with her mother, and there was no plausible pretext for introducing me into their house. This separation cut me to the heart, but I had some hope we should meet again. I returned to the Hague. A few days after her husband went to Switzerland, and she once more came to the

Hague. My bliss was supreme, but it was only a transient gleam. For ten days I was infinitely the happiest man in the world. She had not the heart to tell me the day she was to set out for the villa, nor I the courage to demand it. One morning my friend, *D'Acunha*, called and told me she had been absolutely obliged to leave, and he placed in my hand a note from her which struck me dead, although every line breathed her affection and ingenuousness. She spoke of the absolute necessity (to avoid scandal), of delaying no longer to join her husband, for he had commanded her to do it. My friend mildly added that since there was no alternative, I must yield to necessity and reason.

I should not be believed should I recount all the frenzies of my desperate heart. I heartily desired to die, but I said not a word to any one; I feigned sickness so that my friend might leave me, and called the surgeon, who took some blood. When he left I pretended to want to sleep, and drawing the curtains of the bed, waited some minutes thinking what I should do. I untied the bandage of my arm with a firm purpose to bleed to death. But that not less shrewd than faithful Elia, who saw my desperation, had been forewarned by my friend, and pretending I had called him, he came to my bedside and raised the curtains. I was surprised and mortified, perhaps shaken in my boyish determination, and I told him that the bandage had got loose. He pretended to believe it, and bound it up again; but after that he did not lose sight of me a moment. He sent for my friend, who insisted upon taking me to his house, where he kept me for many days without ever leaving me. My grief was profound and silent; it may be I was ashamed or distrusted myself, and did not dare to show it. So I either remained silent or wept. But time, the counsels of my friend, the various amusements he constrained me to take, and some beam of uncertain hope of once more seeing her return to Holland the following year, and more than all, perhaps, the natural buoyancy of nineteen, contributed by degrees to alleviate my grief. My mind was long a victim to suffering, but in a few days reason triumphed. Still most sad, I determined to return to Italy. The sight of a country and

places where I had been left sighing for my loved object almost as soon as possessed, filled me with grief. It gave me pain to part with such a friend; but observing my dejection of spirits, he encouraged my leaving, being well convinced that motion, change of objects, distance and time, would infallibly restore me.

About the middle of September I separated from D'Acunha at Utrecht, where he accompanied me, and by the way of Brussels, Lorraine, Alsace, Switzerland and Savoy, I pushed on to Piedmont without stopping, except to sleep, and in less than three weeks I was once more at Cumiana, in the villa of my sister; I had avoided Turin to escape all society, for I had need only of solitude. I saw nothing of all the cities I passed, Nantes, Strasburgh, Basle and Geneva, except the walls; I never opened my mouth to my faithful Elia; he caught every sign and anticipated every want in silence.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### RETURN HOME—DEVOTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES.

(1769.) SUCH was my first journey of two years. After staying six weeks in my sister's villa, I accompanied her to Turin. I had grown so rapidly I was no longer recognized by my friends, so great was the change that roving, careless life had made in my constitution.

In passing Geneva I bought a trunk full of books. Among them were the works of *Rousseau*, *Montesquieu*, *Helvetius* and similar authors. On reaching home with a heart overflowing with melancholy and love, I felt the absolute necessity of applying my mind to some study with vigor. But what should I do? A superficial education, crowned by six years of idleness and dissipation, had equally unfitted me for every kind of application. Undetermined whether I should now stay

at home or continue my travels, I resolved, for that winter at least, to shut myself up in the house of my sister. I read all day, walked out very little, and literally saw no one. My readings were always confined to French Books. I began the *Heloise of Rousseau*, I tried several times to read it, but although I had by nature an impassioned character, and was at the time deeply in love, yet I found in the book so much mannerism, elaboration, affectation of sentiment, and so little genuine feeling, so much affected ardor of mind, and such great coldness of heart, I could never get through the first volume. His political works I did not understand, and therefore passed them by. The prose writings of Voltaire delighted me exceedingly, but his verses I found very tedious. I never read his *Henriade*, except by piece-meal; and only detached passages of *Pucelle*, for obscenity I never liked. I also read some of his Tragedies. *Montesquieu* I read twice from beginning to end, with wonder and delight, perhaps also with some utility. *L'Esprit D'Helvetius* made also upon my mind a profound but unpleasing impression. But the book of books, the one which made me pass away the hours of that winter with ravished delight, was Plutarch! His lives of those truly great men; as Timoleon, Cæsar, Brutus, Pelopidas, Cato, I read over four or five times with such transport of excitement, tears and enthusiasm, that a person in an adjoining room would have supposed I was mad. When the great deeds of those wonderful men flashed on my mind, I jumped upon my feet, carried away with excitement, and tears of grief and anger rose to my eyes, to find myself, born in Piedmont, and in times, and under governments, where nothing noble could be said or done, nay scarcely conceived or felt with impunity.

During that same winter, also, I studied with much interest the planetary system, and the laws and movements of the heavenly bodies as far as I could go without the aid of my incomprehensible geometry. The historical part of that science, which is so entirely mathematical, I could not master. But although girdled by such ignorance, I understood enough to elevate my mind to the immensity of the physical creation, and no study would more have ravished and filled my soul if I had possessed the requisite principles for its pursuit.



In the midst of these sweet and noble engagements which delighted me, although they increased my taciturnity, melancholy and nausea for every ordinary occupation, my brother-in-law was continually urging me to take a wife. Naturally I should have been inclined to domestic life, but having seen England at nineteen, and read and felt deeply Plutarch at twenty, admonished me against taking a wife and begetting children at Turin. However, with the fickleness of youth I at last consented my brother-in-law should negotiate a marriage for me with a very noble and rather pretty heiress with jet-black eyes, that would very soon have made me throw aside Plutarch in the same way Plutarch had weakened my passion for the beautiful Hollander. And I will confess that, at the time, I had the baseness to be more influenced by the wealth than the beauty of the girl. To redouble my income, thought I, will enable me in popular language to cut a good figure in the world. But my good fortune served me better than my unstable judgment. The girl from the beginning had been favorably inclined to me, but she was prevailed upon by one of her aunts to bestow her hand upon a young son of a numerous family, much less better provided for than myself, but he possessed favor at court with the Duke of Savoy, heir presumptive to the throne, whose page he had been, and from whom he afterwards received great consideration. He was of an excellent character, and an amiable disposition, while I was esteemed a madcap, reckless of the opinions and the scandal of society, and guilty of contempt for the follies and the usages of the world, which was not to be forgiven—I was rejected. The girl did very well for herself, for she passed a happy life with the family into which she married, and she did still better for me, for had I then become entangled in the snares of matrimony the muses would certainly have deserted me for ever.

That rejection caused me both pain and pleasure, for while the affair was in negotiation I was often sorry I had undertaken it; I secretly blushed with shame at the thought of stooping to do for money an action contrary to my own convictions of honor. But one littleness begets another, which in its turn prepares the way for all that is contemptible. But I had not



abandoned the idea of becoming a diplomatist, for in such a profession he succeeds best who shows the most money; and I thought a rich marriage would contribute to my design. I was also crowded on in my diplomatic tendencies by my brother-in-law, who was an inveterate courtier. Fortunately my diplomatic schemes vanished in smoke with this matrimonial failure. I never made an application for any such station, and less to my shame be it said, this stupid and low desire was born and died in my own breast—not a soul knew it except my brother-in-law.

The failure of these two schemes determined me to prosecute my travels for three years longer to see what would become of me. The age of twenty-one left me time to think. I had adjusted my affairs with my curator, whose power had terminated. Examining my affairs I found my income much greater than my curator had pretended; and in this he rendered me a signal service, by teaching me lessons of economy, which I seldom disregarded in my future life. Finding myself with an effective spendible income of about 2500 sequins, besides a large sum saved during my minority, I esteemed myself rich enough for a single man in our country; and abandoning all idea of accumulating, I arranged everything for my second journey, which I determined to make more dashinglly.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SECOND JOURNEY THROUGH GERMANY, DENMARK, AND SWEDEN.

AFTER obtaining the indispensable and hard permission of the king, I set out in May, 1769, for Vienna. In this journey I abandoned to my faithful Elia all money troubles, and began to reflect seriously upon life. That fastidious and indolent melancholy, that mere impatience of place which had once tormented me, were now succeeded by a kind of pleasing sadness, which loved reflection. This was the combined effect

of my disappointment in love, and a close application for six months to study. The sublime Essays of *Montaigne* were of great value to me, and perhaps I owe the little I have ever *thought* to him. His ten small volumes occupied exclusively the pockets of my carriage, and were my constant and faithful companions. They delighted and instructed me, and they flattered my ignorance and pride, for I used to open them at random and read a page or two and throw them down to abandon myself to my own reflections. But I was mortified to meet on almost every page Latin passages I could not understand, and I used to hunt in the notes for the interpretation of the most trivial quotations, even in prose, to say nothing of the sublime poets. I will say more even—his frequent quotations from our early Italian poets I leaped over, for they would have cost me some little effort. Such was my early ignorance and subsequent disuse of this divine tongue, which I was every day forgetting more and more.

My route lay through Milan and Venice, cities I wished to revisit—Trent, Inspruck, Augsburgh and Munich, I passed them all rapidly. Vienna participates too much in the littleness of Turin, without its local beauty; but I stayed there all summer and my time was lost. I made a trip in July to Buda, to see a part of Hungary. At last I was forced by ennui into society, but I was well shielded against the insidious arts of love, by practising the remedy recommended by Cato.

During this visit to Vienna, I might easily have been familiarly acquainted with the celebrated Poet *Metastasio*, in whose house our Minister, the worthy *Count di Canale*, passed his evenings with a select company of scholars; who read by turns, portions of Greek, Latin, and Italian classics. This good old *Count di Canale* loved me, and his pity was excited, when he saw me wasting my time, and he very often proposed to introduce me at the poet's house. But I had little inclination to form new acquaintances; I was also wholly engulfed in French, and slighted every Italian book and author, consequently I supposed that assemblage of literary book-worms could of course be nothing but a fastidious crew of pedants. And besides I had seen *Metastasio*, in the imperial Gardens at *Schoenbrunn*, go

upon his knees (after the fashion) before Maria Theresa, and with a face so utterly servile, that I being youthfully *Plutarchized* (*Plutarchizzando*), I, always the sport of extravagance, would not have cultivated any friendship or familiarity with a Muse rented or sold to a despotism I so cordially abhorred. In this style I went on, gradually assuming the character of a wild thinker, and these extravagant ideas blending with the passions of twenty-one, transformed me too much into a ludicrous and original being.

In September I went on to Prague and Dresden, where I stayed a month; afterwards to Berlin, for a sojourn of the same period. On entering the States of Frederick the Great, which seemed the continuation of a single Body-Guard, I felt my horror doubled and trebled, for that *military trade*, which is the most infamous, and, in fact, the only basis of arbitrary power, the necessary fruit of such myriads of satellite soldiers. I was presented to the king; I felt no emotion of wonder or respect but of indignation and even of rage; feelings whose power and intensity were every day inflamed by the sight of all those objects which have usurped the face and fame of Truth. *Count di Finch*, minister of the king, presented me; he asked why, being in the service of my king, I had not that day appeared in uniform. I replied; There seems to be no lack of uniforms here! The king addressed to me the four words, customary on such occasions. I eyed him profoundly and most respectfully—square in the face, and thanked heaven I had not been born his slave. I departed from that universal Prussian barrack, about the middle of November, abhorring it as much as was necessary.

I set out on my route to Hamburgh, and after staying there three days, went on to Denmark, and reached Copenhagen the first of December. This country pleased me, from its resemblance to Holland, and a certain activity, industry and commerce we are not accustomed to see in petty monarchical governments; and in fact all those things which produce a kind of general prosperity, that strikes one at first sight, and bespeaks a silent eulogium upon the Ruler. Not one of these things can be found in Prussia, although the Great Frederick may *command*

Letters, Arts and general prosperity, to flourish under his *grasp*. I liked Copenhagen then, because it was neither Berlin nor Prussia, a country which left on my mind a more painful and disagreeable impression than any other, although there is in Berlin particularly so much that is grand and beautiful in architecture. But I cannot, even to this day, think of those everlasting files of soldiers, without feeling the same indignation that stirred my soul when I saw them first.

(1770.) During that winter I practised Italian occasionally with Count Catanti, the Neapolitan minister at Denmark. He was brother-in-law to the celebrated Prime Minister at Naples, the Marquis Tanucci, once professor in the university of Pisa. His conversation and Tuscan pronunciation delighted me, in its contrast with the whining, nasal, guttural, Danish dialect, I was forced to hear, but, thank God, without understanding. I studied superficially with the Count Catanti, elegance of idiom, and brevity, and power of style, in which the Tuscans are so superior. I abhorred all other pronunciation except the Tuscan, and had succeeded pretty well in catching the sounds of *u*, *z*, *gi*, and *ci*, and all other Tuscanisms. Encouraged by the Count not to neglect my own beautiful tongue, and resolute never to be a Frenchman, I once more took up Italian books. I read the dialogues of Aretino, which, in spite of their obscenity, delighted me by their originality, variety, and force of expression. I amused myself by this kind of reading during that winter, in which my imprudence and dissipation confined me within doors, and often in bed. I buried myself again, for the third or fourth time, in Plutarch and Montaigne, so that my head was a strange medley of philosophy, politics, and odds and ends. When I could go out my greatest diversion in that northern climate was driving the sledge—poetical velocity, which excited and delighted my equally rapid fancy.

Towards the end of March I set out for Sweden; although the Sound was not yet frozen, the Scania was free from snow. But beyond the city of Norkoping I plunged once more into the wildest winter. The snow was so deep, and the lakes so blocked up with ice, I was obliged to leave my carriage, and go on to Stockholm. The novelty of this scene, and the wild

massive aspect of those forests, lakes, and precipices, transported me beyond measure, and although I had never read Ossian, many of his vast images rose up to my fancy, rudely sculptured, as I long afterwards found them, drawn by himself in the beautifully turned verses of the celebrated Cesarotti.

The aspect of Sweden, and even its inhabitants, of every class, I found so much to my taste, owing perhaps to my fondness for extremes, that were I to choose a home in the north, I would choose that extreme part in preference to any other I know. The mixed government of Sweden, which secures a considerable freedom to its people, excited in me some curiosity to understand it thoroughly. But I was incapable of all serious application, and I only got a general idea of it into my brain. In spite of the small number of the four elective classes, the extreme corruption of the nobles, and of the citizens, who are under the venal influences of the two bribing parties, Russia and France, destroys all concert of action among the different orders for the attainment of a rational and enduring liberty. I continued with zest my sledge excursions, through those deep forests, and over the lakes, till the 20th of April, when, in the short space of four days, the heat of the sun, combined with the wind from the sea, melted the vast packed masses of snow, and the whole surface of the country put on a bright green. It seemed like the work of an enchanter, and I should have poured out my enthusiasm in verses if I had known how to write them.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

CONTINUATION OF MY TRAVELS—RUSSIA—PRUSSIA AGAIN—SPAIN—  
HOLLAND AND ENGLAND.

STILL tormented with the rage for going, although I was well enough off at Stockholm, I left the middle of May for Finland, on my route to St. Petersburg. At the close of April



I had made a trip to Upsal, the great University, and visited on my way some iron mines, but I felt too little interest to examine carefully their curiosities, and it was the same as though I had not seen them at all. I reached Grisselhamn, a little port on the eastern coast of Sweden, opposite the entrance of the Gulf of Bothnia. I again found myself in the midst of winter, on whose heels I seemed destined to run. A great part of the sea was frozen over, and the passage from the continent to the first island (five of which must be passed in making the entrance of the Gulf) was impossible, and I had to wait in that gloomy place for three days, till a favorable wind sprang up which broke the body of ice in different places (*e far crick*, as our poet says), which opened a passage for a small boat. The day after, a fisherman arrived at Grisselhamn from the first island, and told us that with difficulty one could pass. I determined to try, although I was obliged to take a much larger boat to transport my carriage. This increased the difficulty, but lessened the danger, for a large boat could better resist the blows of the floating ice. These moving islands of ice gave a fearful and strange aspect to the sea, which seemed more like a heaving cracked earth than a volume of water. But the wind, thank God, was light, and the strokes of those ice-cakes were more like caresses than blows. Yet as they often closed in on the bow and stopped the passage, and nearly forced us back to the mainland, we were obliged to resort to the *axe*, *that corrector of every insolence*. More than once we were all forced to get out upon those masses and cut our way to give room to work the oars. In this manner we got over to the first island, but the seven Swedish miles cost us more than ten hours. The novelty of this voyage afforded me no little diversion, but perhaps I have talked too long about it to my reader,—it may amuse Italians who seldom witness such spectacles. The remaining six islands were made much sooner, and we got on with less fatigue. I was delighted with the rude wildness of such grand and gloomy scenes, with their vast undefinable silence which reigns there, where one seems to be beyond the bounds of the world.

Landing at last at Abo, the capital of Swedish Finland, I prosecuted my journey over fine roads, with fleet horses, to St. Petersburg. I arrived there the last of May, and I cannot say if it was day or night when I reached that city; for at this season in those polar climates night is almost annihilated. Worn out by the fatigue of having for many nights slept only in my carriage, my head was so confused, and I was so tired of that perpetual gloom, I could no longer tell the day of the week, nor the hour of the day. I hardly knew in what part of the world I was, for the customs, the dress, and the beards of the Muscovites seemed more like those of Tartars than Europeans. I had read Voltaire's history of Peter the Great. I had associated in the academy at Turin with Muscovites, and heard much said about that rising nation, and my fancy, which was continually seizing upon new delusions, had exaggerated it all. But, alas! I had scarcely set my foot in that Asiatic encampment of lined tents, reminding me of Rome, Genoa, Venice, and Florence, than I was inclined to laugh outright. And all I afterwards saw in that country only confirmed my first impression, and I have brought away the precious notice that it is not worth seeing. So much was I disgusted with everything except the beards and horses, that during the six weeks I remained there among those masked barbarians, I did not get acquainted with a soul. I did not even try to see the two or three young men I had known in the academy at Turin, although they were of the first families of St. Petersburg. I had no desire to be presented to the notorious *Autocratrix Catharine II.*, and in fact I never saw the face of that reigning character, who has so much tired out fame in our days. I afterwards discovered that the true, the real secret of such conduct was a mere intolerance of inflexible character, heartfelt hatred of tyranny in the abstract, attached in this instance to a person justly charged with a horrid crime, the unprovoked and traitorous murder of her defenceless husband! I well remember that among the numerous pretexts adduced by her vindicators in justification of such a deed, they even alleged that Catharine II. took the reins of the Empire, to repair the injuries done to the state by

her husband, to atone also in part for the rights of humanity, so cruelly outraged by the universal slavery of the Russian people, by giving them a just constitution. Finding them still in a servitude so complete after five or six years of the administration of this same philosophising Clytemnestra, and seeing the cursed soldier race sitting upon the throne of St. Petersburg, in a more disgusting form perhaps than at Berlin, all this will account for my contempt for that people, and my unlimited abhorrence of their wicked rulers.

Disgusted with everything Muscovite, I had no desire to visit Moscow as I had determined, and every moment I delayed my return to Europe seemed a thousand years. I started at the close of June on my route to Riga, through Narva and Rewel, over sandy, barren, and desolate plains, with none of the delight I had gazed on the wild forests of rugged Sweden. I passed through Koningsberg and Dantzich. This city, which had been free and opulent, now began to fall under the yoke of its despotic Prussian neighbor, who had already forced upon it his vile myrmidons.

Cursing the Russians and Prussians, and all others under the lying face of man who tyrannize over the human race, worse than brutes; and industriously spreading my name, age, rank, character, and intentions (since all these things are demanded by every sentinel, on entering, passing through, staying, or leaving every little village), I at last stood for the second time in Berlin, after a month's journey as disagreeable as a descent to Pluto, which could not be more dark, gloomy, and inhospitable. At Zorendorff I visited the battle-field where so many thousands of the Russian and Prussian host were freed from their yoke and left their bones. Their vast sepulchral mounds were clearly indicated by the green luxuriant grain which rose over them in the midst of the barren, sickly field. Here the sad but true reflection was forced on me, that slaves were born to enrich the soil. But all this only the more inflamed my desire, and prepared me to see merry England.

I was obliged to stop three days in Berlin to rest myself a little from so fatiguing a journey. I left at the close of July for Magdeburg, Brunswick, Gottingen, Cassel, and Frankfort.

In entering Gottingen, so famed for its brilliant university, I encountered a fine little ass which I feasted almost to death, for I had not seen such an animal for nearly a year, plunged as I had been into the North where it can neither breed nor thrive. That encounter of an Italian and German ass in a University so famous, I should have celebrated in some light and whimsical verses, could my pen have done justice to my disposition, but my writing incapacity was every day becoming more and more absolute. So I contented myself with my own fancies, and passed with my little ass a complete festal day all alone. And festal days were rare with me, for I was always in solitude, without occupation, and seldom opened my mouth, or took up a book.

Tired out by this time with all *Germanisms*, I left Frankfort after two days, and went on to Mentz, where I embarked on the Rhine, and descended that classic river to Cologne, experiencing not a little pleasure in sailing along its charming banks. From Cologne I went by the way of Aquisgrana to Spa, where two years before I had passed some weeks, and left with a desire to see again with a free heart, for life there suited my humor—it united rumor and solitude, and I could remain unobserved and unknown in the midst of public fêtes and gaieties. In fact, I found myself so pleasantly situated, I stayed from the middle of August to the close of September—a long time for me, who never could be contented anywhere. Here I bought a span of horses from an Irishman, one of which was of no common beauty, and took my heart at once. I rode out on horseback morning, noon, and evening, dining in company with eight or ten other foreigners of every country, and my evenings were passed in seeing beautiful girls dance. I thus passed, or to speak more properly, wasted my time very agreeably. But the bathing season being nearly over, and the place deserted, I set out to visit once more my friend D'Acunha in Holland; but certainly not to see again my once so well beloved mistress, who for more than a year had been settled with her husband at Paris. Not wishing to part with my two superb horses, I sent Elia on with the carriage, while partly on foot, and partly on horseback, I journeyed on to Liege.



Here the French minister, an old acquaintance, presented me to the prince bishop of Liege, so that if I had not seen the famous Catharine II., I had at least seen the court of the prince of Liege ! At Spa I had also been presented to another ecclesiastical prince much more microscopic still, the Abbé of Stavelo in Ardennes. The same French minister presented me at the court of Stavelo, where we had a merry and well cooked dinner. But the courts of the Crosier disgusted me less than those of the musket and drum, although it is impossible to laugh enough at either of these two scourges of mankind which are worthy of such supreme ridicule.

From Liege I went on with my horses to Brussels and Antwerp, and crossing the pass of Mordyke, I reached Rotterdam and the Hague. My friend, with whom I had always maintained a correspondence, received me with open arms, and finding me a little more sensible, continually aided me with his cheerful and wise counsels. I stayed with him about two months ; but I was mad to see England again, the season was advancing, and we separated towards the end of November. Taking the same route made so pleasantly before, I landed at Harwich, and in a few days found myself once more in London. There I met the friends I had seen during my first visit, the Prince di Maserano, Ambassador of Spain, and the Marquis Caraccioli, minister of Naples,\* a man of high, sagacious, and facetious genius. They were more than fathers to me during this residence of seven months in London, during which time I was plunged into some extraordinarily rugged adversities as will be seen.

---

\* The same who met so tragical and bloody an end at Naples. For perhaps the best account ever written of the end of the prince, see Cooper's admirable "Wing and Wing," where the bold writer has fearlessly spoken, although his words have covered the name of Nelson with infamy.



## CHAPTER X.

### SECOND WILD LOVE AFFAIR.

(1771.) DURING my first visit to London, I had been captivated with a beautiful lady of high rank ; and unconsciously to myself her image had wrought itself into my heart ; which contributed to render that country so delightful, and inflamed my desire to return. But although she had not frowned on my addresses, yet my restive and wild disposition had preserved me from her snares. On my return I was somewhat more of a gentleman—had reached an age more susceptible of love, and forgetting my first attack of that unlucky contagion which resulted so unsatisfactorily at the Hague, I now fell so desperately under its sway, the recollection of it still makes me shudder, while I sit here writing in the first frost of my old age. I often met with my *bella Inglese* at Prince Maserano's, with whose lady I had taken a box at the Italian Opera. I never saw her in her own house, for at that time English women were not accustomed to receive *visits* particularly from foreigners. Besides her husband was as jealous of her, as an Englishman knows how to be. These obstacles only inflamed my passion—I met her every morning at Hyde Park, or on some other promenade ; every evening I saw her in some crowded assembly, or at the theatre, and the matter became every day more and more serious. At last I was happy in the thought that my passion was returned, yet I found bitterness in the reflection, that all this could not continue with security, for any great length of time.

The days passed—they flew ; spring was already advanced, and by the end of June, at the farthest, she was going into the country for seven or eight months, where it would be absolutely impossible to see her at all. In the meantime I waited for June to come, as the day of my death, for the physical possibility of surviving such a separation never entered my mind. This passion surpassed my first in intensity and duration. Absorbed in the fatal thought, of being forced to die, when we sepa-

rated, I acted the part of a man who has nothing to lose. The character too of my mistress only made me madder still, for she seemed neither to understand, nor to relish anything by halves.

At last our imprudences aroused her husband, and on several occasions he showed some signs of resentment—nothing pleased me better, and I only waited for an outbreak, that would bring matters to a crisis—salvation or death. In this horrible state I lived five months, when the bomb burst in the following manner.

I had been frequently to the house, at an imminent risk—but hitherto we had escaped detection. The London houses are small, the doors are always kept shut, the servants are generally in the basement, so that a person within may easily introduce a stranger into some room near by, on the same floor. Consequently all my contraband introductions had succeeded admirably well, for I took care to be on the spot at those hours the husband was gone, and the servants were at their meals. Success encouraged us to greater risks. In May her husband took her out to a villa, sixteen miles from London, to pass eight or ten days, and we immediately fixed the day and hour of meeting. Her husband was an officer in the Guards, and we chose a day when he would be obliged to attend a review and sleep in London. That same evening I set out on horseback unattended; she had given me the exact topography of the place, and I knew what I was about. I left my horse at an inn a mile distant and prosecuted my journey on foot, through the dark, to the gate of the park, where the lady herself awaited me; and we entered the villa unseen, as we supposed. But these visits had been brimstone on the fire, and nothing would have satisfied us but to know they would last for ever. We now took certain measures for repeating them as often as possible, while this short *villeggiatura* lasted; well knowing a long and dreadful separation was just at hand.

The next morning I returned to London, raving to think two days must pass before we could meet again. I counted the hours and the minutes of the separation. I lived in a constant delirium, indescribable, incredible to those who have not passed

the same ordeal, and certainly few have one so dreadful. I found no peace, except in riding and dashing about like a madman—I knew not where—a moment of quiet or repose, to eat or sleep, and I bounded again to my feet with horrible groans and screams, and, like a raving lunatic, vented my fury in rushing around the room. I still kept one beautiful horse I purchased at Spa, and when I was on his back I played off the maddest pranks, frightening even the horsemen of England, scaling the highest and widest hedges heels over head, and wide ditches, as though they had been level ground. One of those mornings, which intervened my visits to that blessed villa, while riding out with the Marquis Caraccioli, I thought I would show him a fine feat with my noble horse; I reined him up before the highest fence I could find between the road and the meadow. But half mad myself, I neglected to give in time the necessary help to the horse, and as he leaped, he struck one foot against the fence, and we both rolled in the meadow together. He leaped first upon his feet—I was not conscious of having hurt me in the least; besides my mad passion had quadrupled my courage, and it seemed that I was looking for the first chance of breaking my neck. The Marquis now cried out from the other side of the scaled hedge, and begged me not to make another trial; but I caught my horse, and unconscious what I had done, sprang to his back and spurred him up to the same fence. He now amply restored my honor and his own, for he scaled the fence in an instant. But my triumph was short; I had rode on only a few steps when I began to feel a burning pain in my left shoulder, which was in fact dislocated, and the collar-bone broken. The pain increased, and the few miles we had to go seemed interminable. The surgeon came, and after bantering with me a long time, said he had replaced everything and ordered me to stay in bed.

Let him who knows what love is fancy to himself my fury and madness on finding myself thus nailed to the bed in this style on the eve of the happy day fixed for my second visit to the villa! This happened Saturday morning; I endured it through the day, and Sunday about six in the evening, after a

little repose, determined at all hazards to get up, and without any regard to Elia's entreaties, I entered a carriage and set off for the villa. A ride on horseback was now impossible—I was bandaged up, and tortured with pain. I dared not ride as far as the villa, and I left the carriage two miles behind, making the remaining distance on foot, with one hand in a sling and a drawn sword in the other, alone in the night, to the house of another man, not as a friend.

In the meantime the jolting of the carriage had so disarranged the bandages, and increased the pain, that my shoulder was again dislocated. But I was the happiest man in the world as I drew nearer to my mistress. At last, not a little exhausted, for as I had no confidants I could have no help, I reached the park. I was obliged to scale the fence, for the gate through which I had passed before was now locked. The husband was called to the review of the following day (Monday), and had gone that evening to sleep in London.

I reached the house and found her waiting for me. Neither of us thought much of the incident of finding the gate locked, which she had opened herself several hours before—I remained till daybreak, and went out the same way I had entered, firmly convinced I had been seen by no living soul. I made my way back to my carriage, and reached London about seven in the morning, half mad with the anguish of the separation, and the torture of a dislocated and terribly inflamed shoulder. But I was so wild with phrenzies I borrowed no trouble about consequences, although I foresaw everything. The surgeon adjusted the bandages again, but I would not suffer him to replace the shoulder. Tuesday evening I was somewhat better, and went to the Italian theatre. I found Prince di Maserano and his lady in their box, and they were not a little astonished to see me, for they supposed I was maimed and in bed.

In the mean time I maintained a calm aspect listening to the music, which stirred up a thousand stormy feelings in my heart: although my face, as usual, was like marble. All at once I heard my name called out by some one in the lobby. By a kind of mechanical impulse I sprang to the door, opened it, passed out and closed it behind me in an instant, and there



before my eyes stood the husband of my mistress demanding admittance from one of the guards. I had long expected this encounter, and although I could not honorably provoke it, I desired it above anything else in the world. These brief words now passed between us:—"Here I am," I exclaimed, "who seeks for me?" "I," he replied, "I seek you, for I have something to say to you." "Let us go," I answered, "I am ready to hear you," and we both left the theatre without another word. It was about half-past seven, for in the long May days the London theatres open at six. From the Haymarket we went to St. James' Park, where through a post paling we entered Green Park. Here in a secluded corner we drew our swords without saying a word. I was prepared for the meeting—for gentlemen carried swords at the time, and he had run to a swordseller to provide himself with a good one the moment he returned from the villa. In passing through Pallmall he had two or three times reproached me with having clandestinely entered his house, and he demanded my reason. I was wild with frenzy; in my inmost soul I felt how just and sacred was the wrath of my adversary, but I only replied, "It is not true, sir—but since you believe it I am here to give you a good account of the matter." He repeated his accusation, and gave a minute account of my last visit to the villa, with every particular. I still declared, "It is false." Finally he ended the matter by saying, "Why do you wish to deny it when my wife herself has confessed it all?" I was absolutely confounded, and replied (although I did wrong and repented of it afterwards), "What she has confessed I will never deny." But I felt repugnance while standing before the face of an injured man, in denying what was so clear; but I forced myself up to it to save the woman if possible. This was said before we arrived on the ground. In the act of drawing my sword he observed my arm in a sling, and he had the magnanimity to ask if that would offer any impediment to fighting. I replied I hoped not, and thanking him for his courtesy began the attack. I was always a bad swordsman, and I now fought reckless of all the rules of the art, like a madman as I was, bent on death. What I did I can hardly say. I only know I attacked him with



fury. The sun which was just setting, was streaming so full in my eyes I could hardly see. But six or eight minutes of desperate fighting changed our position and brought the sun directly behind me. We battled away a long time, I dealing out blows in all directions, and he parrying them, and I concluded he did not kill me because he didn't wish to ; and I didn't kill him because I didn't know how. At last he made a pass and hit me on the right arm, between the hilt and the elbow. In a moment he saw I was wounded. I did not feel it, it was so slight. Lowering the point of his sword he told me he was satisfied, and asked if I was, also. I replied that I was not the offended party and the matter rested with him. He sheathed his sword, and I did the same. He immediately took himself off, and I remained a little while to see what damage I had sustained. My coat was cut, but feeling little pain, and seeing little blood, I judged the wound was only a scratch. Unable to use my left arm I could not take off my coat, and I contented myself with tying a handkerchief around the wound as well as I could with my teeth, to diminish the loss of blood. Leaving the park I returned to the theatre, through Pallmall, where I arrived just three quarters of an hour after I left. Perceiving by the light of the streets, that neither my coat nor hands were stained with blood, I applied my teeth once more to remove the handkerchief. Feeling a mad and boyish desire of showing myself again at the theatre, I went to the same box where the affair had begun. The Prince immediately asked me why I had left the box so hastily and where I had been. Perceiving they had overheard no part of the conversation outside the box, I replied I had forgotten an engagement with a person, and therefore I had gone out. I said nothing more.

I made a desperate struggle to control myself, but I was deeply agitated about the result of such an affair, with the dreadful consequences to my beloved mistress. A quarter of an hour after I left, without knowing what to do with myself. But as the wound did not prevent me from walking, I thought I would go to the residence of a sister-in-law of my mistress, who had favored our intercourse, and in whose house we had sometimes met.

This was a lucky idea, for the first object that met my eyes after entering the house was my mistress herself. At a sight so unexpected, with such a tumult of strange feelings, I nearly fainted away. She gave me a full account of the affair as it *ought* to have been, but not as it really was, for the truth reached me through another channel. She told me her husband was informed of my first visit to the villa, although he could not identify my person. He had ascertained that a horse had been left at an inn, and taken away in the morning by a person who paid generously without saying a word. He had set some one in his confidence to play the spy this second time, who on his return Monday morning gave him a clear account of everything. Sunday he set out for London, while late the same day I went to his villa. The spy (one or more) saw me pass the church yard, approach the park gate, and finding it shut scale the fence. He had also seen me leave at day-break, and start off on foot on the great road to London, but no one had shown himself to me. Having no interest of his own at stake, and seeing me going on with a desperate look and a drawn sword, he probably thought it better to let me go on. But certain it is if any attempt had been made by one, two, or three, to arrest me, the matter would have had a fatal termination for me, and in attempting flight I should have been taken for a robber, to have made an attack or defence, an assassin, and as for myself, I was fully determined not to be taken alive. I should have been driven to the sword, and in that country of wise and inflexible laws, such things infallibly meet with the severest punishment. I tremble even now writing this account, but I did not falter at the time.

It so happened that in returning to his villa on Monday, the husband had been driven by the same postilion who had waited two miles from there all night for me. He had given him an account of the matter as something uncommon, and from the picture he had drawn of my stature, form, and hair, it was evident who was the visitor. He had the account also from his own servants, and thus at last he gathered the so much desired certainty of his damages !

And here, in describing the strange effects of English jealousy, Italian jealousy is forced into a laugh, so different are the passions in different characters and climates, and especially under such widely different laws. Every Italian reader will now expect to hear of blows, poison, and stabs, or the confinement of the wife, &c. But nothing of all this happened. The English husband, although he adores his wife in his way, loses no time in invectives, in threats or quarrels. He appeals to the law, and convicts her of her crime. On Tuesday morning the husband gave her to understand he no longer considered her his wife, and that he should immediately procure a divorce. And as this would not be enough, he would make me atone dearly for the insult—that day he should set out for London, where, without doubt, he would find me. She now dispatched a note of warning to me by one of her confidants. The messenger was well paid, and he nearly killed his horse, for he made the distance to London in less than two hours, and arrived an hour before the husband. But as luck would have it, I was not found by the messenger or the husband, and knew nothing about it. Having gone out, the husband went immediately to the theatre, where he found me as I have related. Fortune in this casualty secured for me two great advantages. I had dislocated my left arm instead of my right, and I did not receive the letter till after the encounter, or I should have managed matters much worse. The wife set out by another road to London the instant her husband left, and stopped at the house of her sister-in-law near that of her husband. Here she heard that the husband, less than one hour before, had returned in a coach, from which he had dashed out and shut himself in his room without seeing or speaking to a soul. She, therefore, supposed we had met and I had fallen.

This narration I received from my mistress by piece-meal, interrupted as may easily be supposed by the dreadful agitation of those strange feelings which excited us both. But for the moment the explosion had ended in a felicity for us unforeseen, and almost incredible; for the inevitable divorce would bring me the only consummation I desired on earth—to join in myself, the conjugal tie I was now breaking. I was so intoxi

eated with the thought I forgot my wound for hours. I then examined my arm in the presence of my mistress. I found the skin scarified for some distance, and a good deal of blood clotted in the folds of my shirt, without any other damage. I had now the curiosity to examine my sword; it was well battered up by the strokes of my adversary—two-thirds of the distance it was hacked like a saw. I preserved it as a trophy for many years. The night was soon far advanced, and I separated from my mistress. I was determined not to go home without passing by the Marquis Caraccioli, to tell him everything. From the confused manner in which he had heard of the affair, he also firmly believed I had been left dead in the park. He greeted me as a man risen from the dead, and we passed two hours more of the night in talking together, so that I got home about daybreak. Getting to bed after a day crowded with so many and such strange events, I never slept a sounder or a sweeter sleep.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### HORRIBLE UNDECEIVING.

SUCH is the history of the preceding day. Seeing the messenger arrive on a horse all drenched with foam, and being entreated by him to deliver the letter to me without any delay, my good Elia set out in search of me without losing a moment. He first went to the Prince Maserano's, and not finding me, he followed up his search at Caraccioli's some miles distant, thus losing several hours. In returning to my house in Suffolk street, near the Haymarket, he stepped into the Opera, although he did not believe I would go there with a dislocated shoulder and my arm in a sling. The door-keepers who knew me very well, told him I had only ten minutes before gone out with a person who had come expressly to see me. Elia knew very well (but not from me), all about my desperate passion, and as



soon as he heard the name of the gentleman, and thought from whence the letter came, everything flashed clearly on him at once. Knowing how bad a swordsman I was, and that my left arm was disabled, he believed me a dead man. He ran to St. James's Park, but not going by the way of Green Park, he had missed me. Night now came on, and he was obliged with everybody else to leave the Park. Ignorant of my fate he went to the husband's house, thinking he could learn something there, and having better horses, he came up just as the husband himself arrived. He saw him dash into the house with a sword and a terribly agitated appearance. Poor Elia was now more confirmed than ever in his suspicion and he went back to Caraccioli's and gave him an account of all he knew and feared.

I rose the next morning, refreshed from the fatigues of so painful a day, by several hours of the calmest sleep; I doctor-ed my two wounds, my shoulder being more painful than ever, although the other troubled me less, and then hurried to my mistress, with whom I passed the entire day. By means of the servants, who had their eyes on the husband's doings, I knew what was going on. I believed the approaching divorce would put an end to all our misfortunes. Her father, whom I had well known for years, had come on Monday to see his daughter and congratulate her upon uniting herself on her second marriage, with a man worthy of her (as he called me),—but still I saw a dark cloud on the beautiful brow of my mistress, which seemed to foretell the approach of some calamity. She protested with tears and without ceasing, that she loved me above everything—that the scandal and the dishonor brought upon her name, would be amply compensated, if she could always live with me, but she was more than sure I would never marry her. This strange assertion obstinately persisted in, made me desperate. I knew she esteemed me neither false nor dishonorable, and I could not account for her distrust. This harrowing perplexity annihilated all my satisfaction in seeing her freely the whole day; to say nothing of the odium of a persecution already commenced, so trying to any person of honor and sensibility. Thus passed the three days, from Wednesday till Friday. At last I firmly insisted on her solving



the horrid enigma of her words, her melancholy and distrust. At last after a long and serious effort, and a painful preface interrupted by sighs and bitter sobs, she told me "she knew but too well she was in every respect entirely unworthy of me, that I ought not, could not and would not marry her, *for already \* \* before \* \* loving me \* \* she \* \* had \* \* had \* \* loved.*"—"And whom?" I exclaimed, interrupting her with the greatest agitation—"A \* a \* a \* Jockey (a groom of the stable), \* who was \* \* in my \* \* husband's house!"—"He lived there? And when? Oh God! I feel myself dying! But why tell me such a thing. Cruel woman!—It would have been better to stab me."—Here she interrupted me, and by degrees at length made an entire, shameful confession of her brutal passion.

Hearing these indescribably painful particulars, petrified me, till I became insensible as a stone. My very worthy forerunner rival, it then appeared, lived in the husband's house at the very time of which we speak. It was he who had first spied the movements of his lady-love; he had discovered my first visit to the villa, and the horse I left all night at the country inn; he too with others of the house, had afterwards seen and recognized me on my second visit on Sunday evening—and finally having heard of the duel between me and the husband, and his desperation in being obliged to get a divorce from a woman he seemed to adore, this Jockey Lover was induced on Thursday to present himself before his master, to undeceive the husband, avenge himself, and punish the false woman and the new rival. He had moreover openly confessed and minutely described the whole history of his *triennial loves* with his mistress—he also concluded by earnestly intreating his master not to despair for the loss of *such* a wife, but rather congratulate himself upon his good fortune in getting rid of her. These horrid particulars I learned afterwards;—from herself I knew nothing but the fact, and that too extenuated as much as possible.

My anguish and ury, the many resolutions, all false, all fatal, and all vain, which I made and unmade that evening, blaspheming, groaning and screaming, and yet in the midst of such anger and torture still madly loving so unworthy an object, it

is impossible for words to describe, and even now twenty years after, I feel my blood boil while I think of it.

I left her that same night telling her she knew me too well, when she said and repeated so often, I should never make her my wife, and that if I had become acquainted with such infamy after marrying her, I should certainly have killed her with my own hand, and perhaps myself over her body, had I still loved her as well as I unfortunately did at that moment. I added that I despised her somewhat less for having had the fidelity and courage *spontaneously* to confess such a thing, that as a friend I would never abandon her, and that I was ready to go with her to any unknown part of Europe or America and live with her, on condition she should neither be nor appear to be my wife. Thus I parted from her Friday evening, torn by a thousand furies. I rose at daybreak on Saturday morning, and casually glancing my eye over one of the London papers, the first thing that fell under them was my own name. Opening my eyes tolerably wide I read a not very short article, in which the whole affair was minutely and truthfully related, with all the fatal and laughable particulars of my groom-rival, his name, age, figure, and ample confessions to his master. It was enough to strike me dead ! Recovering a little the control of my mind, it was as clear as daylight that the faithless woman had *spontaneously* confessed everything *to me after the Gazette of Friday morning had already confessed it all to all the world !* Losing now all restraint or reason, I rushed to her house and poured out upon her the most furious, despicable and bitter invectives, mingled with love, the deadliest grief, and the most desperate resolutions. I had, however, the mean weakness to return and spend the day with her, some short hours after having sworn she should never see my face again. I went back the day after, and several more, until she determined to abandon England, where she had become a by-word, and go over to France to retire to a convent. I accompanied her through several of the provinces of England to protract the hour of our separation, cursing myself for it, but unable to tear myself from her ; at last I seized a moment when shame and indignation were stronger than love, and leaving her in

Rochester, where she and her sister-in-law set out by Dover for France, I returned to London.

On my arrival I learned that the husband had prosecuted the suit for a divorce in my name—thus according me a preference over our third triumvir, his own groom, who by the bye he still retained in his service! So truly generous and evangelical is the jealousy of an Englishman. But I have not a little praise to bestow upon this injured husband. He would not kill me when he had me in his power, nor impose any fine upon me, as the laws of that country (where every affront has its *tariſſ*) enabled him to do it so heavily, forcing me to handle the purse instead of the sword, and impoverishing, or at least embarrassing me exceedingly; for the indemnity awarded would be proportioned to the injury he had sustained, loving his wife as he did, and suffering the deep disgrace brought upon him by the groom, who could make no restitution. Therefore, I estimate that when converted into sequins I should not have come off clear for less than ten or twelve thousand—perhaps more. That high-born and moderate young man behaved towards me, in that humiliating affair, vastly better than I deserved. The testimony, and the confessions of divers persons, established the case beyond doubt, and even without my presence, or the least impediment to my leaving England, a complete divorce was obtained.

I have thus indiscreetly, perhaps, but with design, thus enumerated the smallest particulars of this extraordinary, and to me important affair, not only because it made a great noise at the time, but afforded me an excellent occasion of putting myself to the test. I thought that by analyzing the affair with truth and minuteness, I should satisfactorily unfold my character to my readers.

## CHAPTER XII.

MY TRAVELS TO HOLLAND AND FRANCE RESUMED—VISIT TO SPAIN  
AND PORTUGAL—RETURN TO PARIS.

AFTER so dreadful a storm I found no peace, while I had day by day before my eyes those same scenes, and I allowed myself to be persuaded by the few who still felt a friendly commiseration for my state to leave England. I accordingly set out about the end of June, and broken down in my spirit, I sought some consolation in directing my steps first of all to my friend, D'Acunha, in Holland. I arrived at the Hague, and remained with him several weeks secluded from society. He allayed somewhat my anguish, but the wound was too deep to heal at once. My melancholy was daily increasing, and believing that exercise and the excitement inseparable from change would restore me, I set out on my route to Spain, almost the only country in Europe I had never seen.

My route to Brussels lay through places that inflamed more and more the wounds of my lacerated heart, for I recalled my first Holland love, and associated it with this English passion. I allowed my fancy to range, and wept, and raved, and smothered my grief, till I finally arrived at Paris. That immense city pleased me no better than on my first visit. I found not the least amusement or diversion. But I remained a month to allow the excessive heat to pass before plunging into Spain. In the meantime I could easily have seen and frequented the celebrated Jean Jacques Rousseau, by means of an Italian friend who was familiar with him, who used to say he was a great favorite with the said Rousseau. This Italian was determined we should meet, pledging us mutual pleasure. I had a high esteem for Rousseau, more for his pure and manly character—his sublime and independent conduct, than for his books, for the few I had been able to read seemed rather tiresome offsprings of affectation and labor; yet not being by nature either curious or tolerant, and feeling, but with less reason,



much prouder and more inflexible than he, I would never submit to this doubtful presentation to a vain and whimsical man, from whom, had I ever received an unkindness I would have returned ten, for thus I have always acted by instinct and impetuosity, to return with usury evil and good. So nothing was done about it.

But instead of Rousseau, I began an acquaintance infinitely more important to me, with six or eight of the first men of Italy, and the world. I purchased in Paris a collection of the principal poetical and prose writers of Italy, in thirty-six small beautiful volumes, not one of which, however, was to be found about me at the close of my travels. But during all my journeyings these great masters were my constant companions, although I made little use of them for the first two or three years. I certainly at the time bought them more for the sake of having them than reading them, for I felt no desire of applying my mind to anything. Italian had so completely gone out of my head, that every author above Metastasio gave me great difficulty. But I skimmed over the thirty-six volumes, and was not a little surprised to see such hosts of poetasters in the company of our four great poets; people of whom (such was my ignorance) I had never heard even the name, and these were a Torracchione, a Morgante, a Ricciardetto, an Orlandino, a Malmantile, and I know not who—poems which many years after I deplored the abundance! But my new library became very dear to me, for from henceforth I placed once and for ever in my house those six luminaries of our tongue, in which is to be found everything. I mean Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli, of whom to my misfortune and shame I had reached the age of twenty-two, without having read a line, with the exception of a few pages of Ariosto at the academy. Armed with these powerful shields against idleness and *ennui*, I set out for Spain the middle of August. I raced on by way of Orleans, Tours, Poitiers, Bordeaux, and Toulouse, the most smiling and beautiful part of France, and entered Spain by the way of Perpignan. Barcelona was the first town where I stopped after leaving Paris. Throughout this long journey I hardly did



anything but weep alone in the carriage, or on horseback, occasionally reading Montaigne, which I had not looked into for more than a year, and this casual reading inspired me with reason and courage, and afforded me even consolation.

My horses had all been sold when I left London, except that beautiful creature left with the Marquis Caraccioli, and as without horses I am never half myself, I bought two soon after my arrival at Barcelona—an Andalusian, of the race of Xeres, a noble, golden chestnut, and a Cordovese *Hacha*, smaller, but high-spirited. I had always longed for Spanish horses, so difficult to extract, and it seemed too good to be true, to have two so beautiful, and they did far more to dispel my sadness than Montaigne. On these horses I determined to make the entire journey of Spain; for the roads throughout that completely African kingdom are so dreadful post-horses are unknown. A slight indisposition forced me to remain in Barcelona till November, and by the help of a Spanish grammar and dictionary I began to study that beautiful language, so easy for the Italians I read Don Quixote carefully and with great delight, but my task was much easier from having so often read it in French.

Journeying on to Saragossa and Madrid, I got used to this new mode of travelling through deserts, where they who are not well supplied with youth, health, money, and patience, cannot long hold out. I got on so well that during those fifteen days journey to Madrid I suffered less on the road than while stopping in those half-barbarous villages—for my restless disposition found its longings gratified only in the excitements of changing scenes.

I made nearly all the journey on foot, while my beautiful Andalusian trotted along by my side with all the docility of a dog, as we talked together, and I found no greater pleasure than in journeying on with him alone over the vast deserts of Aragon. I sent my servants on ahead with the carriage, and followed them at a distance. Elia, mounted on his mule, rode on with his gun, chasing and bagging rabbits, hares, and birds, which abound in those regions. He used to stop at our resting-places and prepare his game for me by the time I arrived.

It was a misfortune to me (but perhaps not to others) that all

this while I could not weave up my fancyings and emotions into verse. In passing through those vast solitudes I should have poured forth a deluge of rhyme, for my melancholy and moral reflections were endless and terrible; airy, gloomy, and wild images, were continually rushing over my fancy. But I knew no language well, nor dreamed of ever writing anything in prose or verse; so I contented myself in my own wild reveries, weeping and laughing immoderately by turns, without knowing why: two things, which, if followed by no composition, are esteemed mere nonsense, and they are; if they produce writings they are called poetry, and they are.

During this wild journey I had become so enamored of that gipsy life, I got tired of Madrid in less than a month. I became acquainted with no living soul there except a watchmaker, a young Spaniard, just returned from Holland, where he learned his art. He was full of natural genius, and knowing something of the world, he mourned over the many woes under which his country struggled.

I must here relate a mad brutality I practised upon my Elia. One evening when this young artist supped with me, Elia entered at the usual hour, while we were talking, to arrange my hair for the night. In doing it up he happened to pull a single hair pretty violently. Without saying a word to him I bounded to my feet swifter than lightning, and with a candlestick I had seized, levelled such a brutal blow upon his right temple, that the blood gushed out suddenly, as from a fountain, and flew in the face, and all over the body of the young man seated in front of me, on the other side of the supper-table. The Spaniard not having observed, or even thought it possible the pulling a single hair could occasion such unexpected fury, believed me mad, and he sprang forward to seize me. But already the bold, offended, and cruelly wounded Elia, had dashed upon me, to beat me, and he did right. But I dodged his grasp, and seized my sword from a box in the room, and had just time to draw it and hold it to the breast of the infuriated Elia, as he turned on me to renew the attack. The Spaniard now tried to separate us; all the house was in an uproar, the servants rushing up stairs, and the strife finally

ended half comic, half tragic, and so extremely disgraceful to me. Getting a little cool an explanation followed. I told him the pulling of my hair had put me out of my wits. He replied he was unconscious of having pulled my hair at all, and the Spaniard remarked, that although I was not insane, I might have shown more sense.

When this horrible quarrel was over, I felt the deepest regret, shame and mortification; and I told Elia, he would have done well if he had killed me on the spot; and he was the man to have done it, too, being nearly a palm higher than myself, tall as I am, and in carriage and strength, nothing inferior to his aspect. The wound on his forehead was not deep, but bled very freely, and had I given the blow a little higher, I should, have slaughtered a man whom I loved in my soul, and all for a hair more or less pulled.

I was shocked at so beastly an excess of anger. Elia was much pacified, but the offence was too fresh to admit of insensibility. I was determined to show no distrust of him. Two hours after, the wound was dressed, everything was in its place, and I went to the bed, leaving the door to Elia's room open as usual, without regard to the Spaniard, who cautioned me against thus inviting an offended man, so recently injured, to take vengeance. I even called out to Elia, that I was in bed and he could kill me that night if he wished, since I deserved it well. But he was a magnanimous hero, and no other vengeance would he ever take, except to keep the two handkerchiefs full of blood with which he had stanching the smoking wound, and show them to me occasionally for many years. This reciprocal mixture of ferocity and generosity cannot be easily understood by those who have no experience of the customs and the blood of the Piedmontese.

I often speculated in after times upon the cause of this terrible display of passion. And it has seemed to me that the irascibility of my nature, irritated still more by continual solitude and idleness, had now reached an extreme point, and the pulling of a hair filled up the vase, and dashed it over. But I never beat a person in my service, only as I would have done my equal in the same circumstances; and never with canes or

weapons, but with my fist, except that I sometimes caught up and flung at them some chair or article that fell under my hand, when suddenly provoked and compelled to strike. But in the very few instances where this has happened, I should always have approved and esteemed those servants who had returned the same salutation, as I never intended to beat my servant as master, but settle it as a matter between man and man.

I lived the life of a bear in Madrid, and left without seeing any of its superb objects, not even the Palace of the Escorial; the Aranjuez; the Palace of the King, or even its master. The principal reason for this extraordinary barbarity was my being on bad terms with our Sardinian ambassador. I had known him in London, where he was Minister on my first visit in 1768, and neither of us had conceived much of a liking for each other. On my arrival at Madrid, the Count was at one of the Royal villas. I improved the occasion of his absence, and left a card with a letter of introduction, as a matter of course, from the Secretary of State. On his return he called, but did not find me; after this, neither of us took any more trouble. All this contributed not a little to exasperate my savage disposition. I set out from Madrid in the early part of December, and by Toledo and Badajoz, went on slowly to Lisbon, where, after twenty days' travelling, I arrived on Christmas Eve.

The view of that city, approached from the Tagus, presents nearly as magnificent an Amphitheatre as Genoa, with much greater extension and variety. I was enraptured with it at a distance, but my wonder and delight diminished as I approached the shore; for a scene of sadness and gloom opened on me, as I passed some entire districts laid waste by the earthquake, covered with masses of ruins and mouldering stones, although fifteen years had gone by since this dreadful catastrophe.

(1772.) That brief sojourn of five weeks in Lisbon will always be an epoch I shall love to remember. Here I became acquainted with L' Abate Tommaso di Caluso, a younger brother to the Count Valperga di Masino, then our Minister to Portugal. This man, of such rare character, habits and learn-



ing, rendered my sojourn delicious (*delizioso*). I dined with him almost every day at his brother's, and passed the long winter evenings with him entirely alone, rather than seek the stupid diversions of the gay world. With him I was always learning; and such were his goodness and forbearance, he knew how to diminish the shame and the burden of my deep ignorance, which must have been to him the more disgusting and loathsome, as his acquirements were so superior. I had never before met with a learned man of this description; and as my pride was as great as my ignorance, I hated their society.

On one of those delightful evenings I felt in the depths of my soul a really plebeian impulse of enthusiastic rapture for the art of poetry. But it was only a transient flame that soon went out, and I slumbered on under its ashes many years. The condescending Abbé was reading that glorious Ode to Fortune, by Giudi, a poet whose name even I had never heard. The stanzas of his beautiful Ode on Pompey filled me with such indescribable transport the good Abbé told me I was born to be a poet, and with study I could write good verses. But that transient fervor passed away, every faculty of my mind was so *rusted* I did not believe it possible, and I thought no more about it.

In the meantime the friendship and bland society of that unique man, that *living Montaigne*, was of great service in giving relief to my spirit. And although I did not feel all the power of his influence, yet I began to read and reflect more than I had done for the previous eighteen months. Nothing else kept me in Lisbon, and without him I would not have stayed ten days. I was pleased generally with the Lisbon ladies; they remind one strikingly of the *lubricus adspici* of Horace. But as health of mind had become a thousand times dearer to me than health of body, I studied to avoid those who might have ensnared me. In the fore part of February I set out for Seville and Cadiz, and carried with me from Lisbon nothing but a high friendship and esteem for the Abbé of Caluso, whom I hoped to meet again in Turin. I found the beautiful climate of Seville delightful, and I liked the original Spanish



face which is better preserved in Seville than in any other city of the kingdom, for I have always preferred a bad original to the best copy. The Spanish and Portuguese are in fact almost the only nations of Europe that retain their ancient manners. Here this is particularly observable in the middle and lower classes. And although the good may be like a wreck in an ocean of every kind of predominating evil, yet I still think those nations capable of accomplishing great undertakings, especially in military achievements, for they are endowed in the highest degree with all the elements of courage, perseverance, honor, sobriety, obedience, patience, and loftiness of mind.

In Cadiz I ended the Carnival very gaily. I perceived some days after I had set out on my route to Cordova, that I had brought with me Gaditanian recollections that would last sometime. Those not very glorious wounds saddened very much the long journey from Cadiz to Turin, which I made inch by inch, through the entire length of Spain to the French frontier where I had before entered. By dint of robust endurance, riding on horseback and ploughing the dirt on foot and abusing myself in every way, I at last reached Perpignan, where I went on by the posts with very much greater comfort. Through that vast tract of country, the only two cities which gave any satisfaction were Cordova and Valentia. I was delighted with all I saw in this latter kingdom, which I travelled through towards the end of March. It was all one of those soft delicious springs described by the poets. The surrounding country, the walks, the limpid waters and the site of the city of Valentia, the beautiful azure of its sky, its (I know not how to express it) elastic and amorous atmosphere, and its women whose mischievous eyes made me curse the Gaditanians; and in fine *le tout ensemble* of that fabulous country seemed so charming that I have brought away from all my journeyings no remembrance of so sweet a land, and none has so often thrown its images of beauty over my fancy.

On arriving the second time at Barcelona by the way of Cortosa, I was so tired out travelling on at that tedious pace

that I parted with my beautiful Andalusian, which had become so attached to me during this last journey of thirty days from Cadiz to Barcelona, I did not wish to abuse him still more by making him trot behind the carriage when I left Perpignan at a more rapid rate. My other horse, the Cordovesan, got lame between Cordova and Valentia, and rather than stop two days to restore him, I gave him away to the daughters of the hostess who were very pretty, recommending them to nurse him carefully and he could be well sold, but I never heard anything more of him. I would not sell my Andalusian, for by nature I abhor trafficking, and I gave him to a French banker at Barcelona, whose acquaintance I had formed during my first visit to that city. To show the heart of a publican I will add a particular. Having over three hundred pistoles of Spanish gold, I should have some difficulty in passing the frontier Custom House (the exportation of gold being prohibited from Spain), I requested this banker to whom I had given the horse, to favor me with a bill of exchange payable at sight in Montpellier, which I should pass on my route. To testify his gratitude, he received my gold, and made me a draft in all the extreme nicety of the exchange of the week. On arriving at Montpellier where the draft was paid in *Louis-d'or*, I received about 7 per cent less than if I had exchanged my effective pistoles! I had, however, no need of putting that money-changing courtesy to the proof to establish my opinion of that class of people, for they have always seemed to me one of the vilest of the social world. They go about under the mask of gentlemen, and give you superb dinners in their houses for display, and rob you on principles of trade, at their banking houses—ever ready to fatten themselves on public calamities.

In fret and fury I cudgeled on my mules, and was only two days in going from Barcelona to Perpignan, which had before consumed four. I was so bent upon rushing on, that I flew by posts from Perpignan to Antibio, and without stopping at Narbone, Montpellier, or Aix. At Antibio I immediately embarked for Genoa, where I rested only three days. I stopped at my birth-place and passed two days with my mother; and on the 5th of May, 1772, I finally reached Turin after an

absence of three years. In passing Montpelier I consulted a surgeon of high reputation on a complaint which had attacked me in Cadiz. He wished to detain me, but I trusted somewhat to my experience already acquired in such matters, and the counsels of Elia, who understood these things very well, for he had often doctored me in Germany and elsewhere, so I paid no heed to the greedy surgeon of Montpelier, and prosecuted my journey. But the fatigue of two months' travelling so aggravated the evil that on my arrival at Turin I devoted nearly all the summer to the restoration of my health. And this was the principal fruit of my second tour of three years.

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THIRD LOVE AFFAIR—FIRST ATTEMPT AT POETRY.

ALTHOUGH in the eyes of the world, and even in my own, no good fruit had resulted from those five years of travelling, yet I had gained not a little expansion of ideas, and learned how to think for myself; consequently when my brother-in-law pressed me to solicit some diplomatic post, I replied, that having a little more closely inspected kings and their representatives, and having not the smallest iota of respect for any of them, I would not have represented even the Great Mogul, and I certainly would not consent to represent the pettiest of all the Kings of Europe—that the man who was born in such a country had no better lot than to live upon his own money, and busy himself in some praiseworthy occupation under the favorable auspices always of a happy independence. These replies caused this good man, who was one of the gentlemen of the King's bedchamber, to make not a few wry faces, but he never alluded to it again himself, and I remained always of the same opinion.

I was now twenty-three years old, sufficiently rich for my country, free as I possibly could be there, somewhat skilled

perhaps in moral and political affairs, in having seen successively so many different countries and men ; a thinker above my years, and also presuming more than I knew. With these characteristics I was necessarily to commit many other errors, till I found some praiseworthy and useful object upon which I could pour out my impetuous, intolerant, and proud spirit.

(1773.) At the close of the year of my return, I took a magnificent house in Turin, on the beautiful square of St. Carlo, and furnishing it with elegance, taste, and simplicity, I prepared to lead a gay life with my friends who flocked around me. My old companions of the academy, the friends of my first wild sports, once more became my intimates. A dozen or more of us were bound firmly together. We established a permanent society, with admission or exclusion by vote, and other buffooneries similar to the juggleries of masonry. No end proposed but our own diversion, we supped often together (but without the least scandal), and at our weekly meetings we reasoned and talked nonsense as we liked upon everything. These august assemblies were held in my house, since it was the most beautiful and spacious of any of the company's, and living alone I was more at liberty. Among these young men (all of whom were nobly born of the first families of the city), we had a little of everything, the rich and the poor, the good, the bad, and the best, the ingenious, the stupid, and the learned. Over such a *mélange* chance had brought together, I could not, nor did I wish to shine the first, although I had seen more of the world than all of them put together. Our laws were discussed, not dictated, and were consequently impartial and just to such a degree, that a body of men like us were as capable of founding a well-balanced Republic as a well-balanced buffoonery. Fortune and circumstances decided that we should construct the last. A box was made of an enormous size, into which were thrown compositions of every sort, to be read by our president, who was the reader for the week and kept the key. Some of these effusions were often exceedingly amusing and extravagant, and as they were anonymous, we were left to divine the authors. To our common and my own particular misfortune, these compositions were all written



(I will not say in the language), but in the words of the French. It fell to my lot to deposit several papers in the box which diverted the company exceedingly. They were facetious mixtures of philosophy and impertinence, written in a French, which, to say the least, could have been none of the best, but they were intelligible, and served very well for an auditory who were not more learned in the language than myself. Among others I introduced, I still preserve one which represents the scene of the Universal Judgment, in which God demands of all souls a full account of themselves, and in which divers persons portray their characters. This was well received, for it was put together with some *salt*, and much *truth*, abounding in allusions and living pictures, so true to the life of a variety of men and women in our city, that they were immediately recognized and called out by the whole company.

This little essay of my ability, to reduce my ideas, such as they were, to paper, proving a source of some pleasure to others, I began by degrees to feel the confused flame of desire and hope, to write something that might have life; but I had no means of realizing this dream. By nature I was inclined to satire, and an appreciation of the ridiculous in persons and things. But, although I fancied I had some quickness of perception, yet I did not really, in my heart, esteem very much this fallacious kind of writing, whose transient success is founded upon the natural malice and envy of men, always more pleased in seeing their neighbors bitten than with the intrinsic merit of the biter.

In the meantime, strong and continual distraction—full liberty—female society—my twenty-four years, and my dozen horses, all these powerful obstacles to improvement, quickly extinguished any inclination I may have had to become an author. Thus I vegetated on in this disgraceful indolent life, never opening a book; and plunging once more, as would naturally be expected into another sad love affair, from which, after infinite vexation, shame and grief, I finally came forth with a true, strong and enthusiastic love of study and labor, which, from that time, never deserted me; and which, at last, ban-



ished the horrors of gloom, satiety and idleness, and I will say more—of madness, towards which I felt myself so surely verging, that had I not plunged into constant and intense application of mind, it would have left me before I was thirty years old, a fate no better than insanity or suicide.

This third intoxication of love was really an indecent affair, and lasted too long. My new flame was a woman of distinguished birth, but of none too good a name even in the gay world, and even somewhat old; that is to say, some nine or ten years older than myself. A passing friendship had already existed between us on my first going into the world, while I was yet in the academy. And now six years or more after, I found myself lodged opposite to her, and continually courted by her. I had nothing to do, and was, perhaps, one of those souls of whom Petrarch says with so much truth and effect:—

“So di che poco canape si attacchia  
Un’ anima gentil, quand’ ella è sola  
E non è chi per lei difesa faccia.”

In fine, my good Father Apollo, who, perhaps, in such a very extraordinary way, wished to woo me to himself, so ordered matters, that although I did not love her in the beginning, nor ever esteem her afterwards; and her uncommon beauty was not much to my taste; yet, in spite of all this, I believed, like a fool, in her immense love for me, and by degrees at last began to love her, and finally, I fell in up to my eyes. There were no longer for me diversions or friends, and from that time, even my adored horses were thrown aside. I was with her from eight in the morning till midnight, eternally; discontented to be there, and yet unable to leave her; Passionate and most tormenting condition in which I lived (or to speak more correctly) vegetated from the middle of the year 1773, till the end of February, 1775, without reckoning the tail of this to me fatal, and at the same time, fortunate comet.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## ILLNESS AND AMENDMENT OF LIFE.

IN going mad from morning to night, during the whole time this affair lasted, my health began to give away; and at the close of the year 1773, I was attacked by a short but violent illness, of such an extraordinary description, the malignant wags, who abounded in Turin, cunningly said, I had invented it expressly for myself. It commenced by an attack of vomiting, which continued thirty-six hours—When my stomach had nothing more to reject, a dreadful *hiccuping* succeeded, with a horrible convulsion of the diaphragm, which prevented me from swallowing even the smallest sip of water. The physician fearing inflammation, took blood from my feet, and immediately the violence of the hiccups ceased, but was followed by so dreadful and universal a spasm of all the nerves, that in my terrible tossings, I dashed my head against the head-board, if they did not hold me, and beat my hands and elbows against everything in my reach. Not the slightest nutriment or drink could I be made to take. Such was the violence of these nervous spasms, no force could control them, and any effort to hold me only made me worse, and even after being sick four days without any nourishment, which greatly reduced my strength, I had yet a power of muscle, I could not have put forth in perfect health. In this manner, I passed five days without swallowing perhaps more than twenty or thirty sips of water, and these were taken when favorable moments could be seized, and often immediately vomited up again.

Finally on the 6th day, after being for five or six hours in a hot bath of oil and water, the convulsions began to subside. The passage of my throat was free again, and drinking large quantities of whey for a few days, restored me to my health. So long had been my abstinence, and so violent my vomiting, that at the pit of the stomach, between the two little bones which form it, a hollow was made as large as a common-sized egg—

this hollow has never closed up. The anger, the shame, and the anguish, with which that unworthy passion embittered my life, had brought on this strange malady, and seeing no other way of escape from the filthy labyrinth, I desired to die. On the fifth day of my sickness, when my physicians were most alarmed, I was besought by my friend, a worthy Cavalier much older than myself, *to confess and make my will*, and I divined from his countenance and movements the object of his visit before he said a word. I anticipated him, and requested to be allowed to do both, and I did so in perfect calmness. Two or three times during my youth I had looked death in the *face*, and without apprehension. But who knows when it shall confront me for the last time, I shall greet it in the same manner? Man must die, that others as well as himself may ascertain his just value.

(1774.) Once restored, I resumed my amorous chains with sadness. But to liberate myself from another chain I determined no longer to hold my military post, which had always been irksome, for I felt an abhorrence of the military trade under any absolute authority whatever, the very idea of it excludes the sacred name of *my country*. I will not, however, deny that at this time my Venus was more ignominious than my Mars. In a word I went to my colonel, and alleging my health as the reason, asked dismissal from the service, which to tell the truth I had never honored, for of the eight years I had worn the uniform I had passed five out of the country, and during the other three scarcely five reviews had taken place in my regiment. The colonel wished me to consider the matter carefully before I asked my dismissal. Through civility I complied with his request, and pretending to have thought of it other fifteen days, I demanded my dismissal with greater earnestness, and obtained it.

In the meantime while I dragged out my days in this slavish servitude,\* ashamed of myself, wearied and annoyed, avoiding

---

\* Allusion is here made to a custom which universally prevailed in Italy about forty years ago, when a lady's equipage was considered incomplete without her *Cavaliere servente*—a gentleman

every friend and acquaintance, for on their countenances I read, silently impressed, my shame. In January, 1774, my *Signora* was seized with a dangerous illness. It was necessary she should remain in perfect silence and repose, and I sat at the foot of her bed to serve her. There I stayed faithfully from morning till night without opening my mouth, that she might not suffer by being obliged to converse. During one of these, certainly not very merry watchings, irritated by tediousness I seized five or six sheets of paper lying under my hand, and began, without plan or design, to scribble a scene of, I know not what to call it, a tragedy, or comedy, or what not, of one act, or five, or ten, but at least some words in the form of a dialogue, and in the shape of verses, between one Photine, a woman, and a certain Cleopatra, who came in after a rather protracted conversation between the two first-mentioned characters. Obligated to give this woman a name, I stumbled on that of Lachesis, without remembering she was one of the three *Fates*. This sudden undertaking appears to me, as I analyze it now, the more strange, since for more than six

---

constantly in her attendance, who sang songs, wrote love ditties, combed lap-dogs, carried mantles, shawls, and reticules, etc. His profession was clearly designated by the term *Cavaliere servente*. It will readily be perceived that this custom could not contribute very much to purity of morals. But although it withstood all the "Thunders of the Vatican," it fell before the shafts of satire. Not a few writers of the times were instrumental in bringing this disgusting practice to a close. But Parini, the poet, put the finishing stroke to the work, and reduced the profession of the *Cavaliere servente* to utter contempt. His satire on this subject is one of the finest pieces of the kind in the Italian language. I, however, beg the reader not to dream for a moment I would intimate such an out-of-the-way idea as that the race of Cavalier Serventes has utterly passed away. I would say, in the language of poor Don Pasquale, in *Donnizetti's* beautiful opera :—

"O questo poi scuzatemi, O questo non può sta."



years I had not written a Tuscan word, or even read Italian, except by piece-meal, and at long intervals. But all of a sudden, I cannot say how nor why, I began that scene in Italian, and in verse.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I began to blot those leaves no other reason induced me to make Cleopatra speak, rather than Berenice, or Zenobia, or any other heroic queen, except having been accustomed for months and years to see in the anteroom of my mistress some beautiful tapestries, which represented scenes in the history of Cleopatra and Antony. My mistress recovered, and without thinking any more of my ridiculous bantling, I deposited it under the cushion of her easy chair, where it remained forgotten about a year. In the meantime, by my Signora, and everybody else, who by chance reposed themselves in the old chair, these first fruits of my many tragedies were hatched.

At last tired out of life, in May of the same year ('74) I suddenly took the resolution of visiting Rome, to see if travelling and absence would not cure me of that morbid passion. I improved the occasion of a sharp dispute with my mistress (and these were not rare), and saying nothing to her, returned to my house. The following day, without seeing her, I made my arrangements, and set out the next morning very early for Milan. She heard of it the evening before, probably through one of my servants, and at a late hour sent me back—according to custom, my letters and portrait. This shook my resolution, but plucking up courage I set off. I reached Novara in the evening, after passing a day of torment. And now repentance, grief and cowardice made so ferocious an attack upon my heart, that reason was thrown overboard, and deaf to the truth, I suddenly changed my mind. A French Abbé I had taken for a companion I sent on to Milan with the servants and carriage, telling them to wait for me there; and six hours before day I leaped upon a horse, with a postillion for a guide, and riding all night, found myself early the next day again in Turin. To be seen would make me the byeword of the town, and I did not dare to enter the city. Stopping at a tavern in the suburbs, I wrote like a supplicant to my offended Signora, begging her

to pardon my flight, and deign to grant me an audience. I received a speedy answer. Elia who had remained in Turin to take care of my affairs during this journey of a year; Elia who always doctored or alleviated my wounds, brought the reply. The audience being granted, I entered the city like a fugitive, under the shadows of night: obtained my entire, shameful absolution, and set out the following morning at day-break for Milan, with an understanding that in five or six weeks, under pretext of health, I should return to Turin. And in this plight, balancing alternately between reason and insanity, and yet keenly cut with shame, I started again for Milan. When I arrived I was lacerated by remorse into a state at once pitiful and ridiculous. I then proved by experience, the truth of that profound and elegant saying of our Master of Love, Petrarch,

“ Che chi discerne e vinto da chi vuole !”

I remained scarcely two days in Milan, devising now how I could shorten that cursed journey, and now how I could protract it without violating my promise. The chain galled me to the bone, but I could not break it—I found no solace except in the excitement of dashing along. I raced through Parma. Modena, and Bologna, and reached Florence. I stayed there two days, and went on to Pisa and Leghorn. Here I first received letters from my mistress. I could endure a separation no longer, and I set out immediately for Genoa, by the way of Lereci. In the latter place I left my companion, the Abbé, with the carriage to be repaired, and putting spurs to my horse, returned to Turin just eighteen days after having set out on a journey for a year. I now even entered the city by night to escape the laugh of the people. It was a truly burlesque journey, but it cost me many tears. Under the ægis (not, however, of conscience) but of my serious and marble visage, I avoided the teasings of my friends and acquaintances, who did not attempt to give me a welcome. And in fact that return was too contemptible, and I became so loathsome, even my own eyes, that I fell into an agony and melancholy that would have either driven me mad or made me burst if it had continued much longer.

But I dragged on my vile chains from the end of June, '74, the epoch of my return from that *quondam* journey, till January, '74, when the heat of my compressed bile reached its summit, and exploded

---

## CHAPTER XV.

### TRUE EMANCIPATION—FIRST SONNET.

(1775.) RETURNING one evening from the opera—the most stupid and tedious amusement in Italy, where for hours I had been kept in the box of this odiously loved woman—I felt so indescribably surfeited I formed the immutable resolution of breaking the chains that bound me—for ever!

I had clearly demonstrated that travelling about by post, so far from giving me strength of purpose, had only enfeebled my resolution. I was determined to pass a stronger ordeal, flattering myself I should better succeed through the natural obstinacy of my iron character. I determined not to go out of my house, which was opposite her's, to watch her windows every day—to see her pass—to hear her speak; and yet, never yield to her, or to her messages, direct or indirect; nor to remembrances; nor to anything in the world, till I had either burst,—for which I should not have cared,—or conquered. I entered into a covenant with a friend in an obligation I could not dishonor. I wrote a note to one who loved me, with whom my childhood had been passed, whom I had not seen for several months. He saw me shipwrecked on that Charybdis—he could not rescue me himself; nor was I willing to have him. I wrote him, in two lines, my immutable determination, and sent him a large lock of my long red hair, which I had sheared off as a pledge of my new resolution, and as an impediment nearly as invincible to my going among men as the golden fleece, since short hair was not then tolerated except in peasants and sailors. I closed my note by begging him to assist me, by his

presence and courage, to fortify my purpose. Cloistered up in my house—all messages prohibited—groaning and weeping, I passed the first fifteen days of this my strange emancipation. Some of my friends visited me, and seemed to pity me, perhaps because I did not let fall a word of regret; but my appearance and countenance spoke for me. I tried to read some trash, but I did not understand even the Gazette, much less any book. I read whole pages with my eyes, and sometimes with my lips, without comprehending a word. I rode out on horseback, in solitary places, and this helped me a little.

In this half-maniac state, I passed two months, till the end of March, '75, when suddenly recovering myself, I began at last to lift my mind and heart above that strange, disgraceful and absorbing love. Fancying on one of those days by myself, if I should not, in time, still devote myself to poetry, I composed slowly and with difficulty, a little piece of fourteen lines, which (esteeming it a sonnet) I sent to the polite and learned Padre Paciandi, whom I sometimes saw. He had always shown himself kindly affected towards me, and grieved to see me thus throwing my time and myself away.

I will here transcribe the Sonnet, and also his courteous reply:—

PRIMO SONETTO.

Ho vinto alfin, sì non m'inganno, ho vinto  
 Spenta è la fiamma che vorace ardeva  
 Questo mio cuor da indegni lacci avvinto  
 I cui moti l'amor cieco reggeva.  
 Prima d'amarti, O Donna, io ben sapeva  
 Ch'era iniquo tal foco, e tal respinto  
 L'ho mille fiate, e mille Amor vinceva  
 Sì che vivo non era, e non estinto.  
 Il lungo duol, e gli affannosi pianti  
 Li aspri tormenti, e i crudei dubbj amari  
 "Onde s'intesse il viver degli amanti"  
 Fisso con occhi non di pianto avari ;  
 Stolto, che dissi ? è la virtù fra' tanti  
 Sogni la sola i cui pensier sian cari.

## TRANSLATION.

I've conquered at last, if I do not deceive me,  
 And spent is the flame which burn'd up my heart—  
 I've broken the fetters of iron which gave thee  
 The power of a Demon—I've rent them apart.

Ere I loved thee, base one, I knew that the fire  
 That burn'd on thine altar, was passion's vile flame ;  
 I swore I would quench it—I swore on my lyre ;  
 But thy conquest still lives in my deep blush of shame.

It still burns on my cheek, while the tears are still falling,  
 And torments still tear me—no ray from above  
 Breaks in to dispel this gloom so appalling,  
 Which broods o'er the soul of the victim of love.

But these tears *shall* be dried—the daylight shall gleam ;  
 And who will deride me, when once I am free ?  
 Or tell me that virtue is only a dream—  
 Be it so, it's the only bright dream for me.\*

## LETTER OF FATHER PACIANDI.

My most esteemed and dearly beloved Count—Monsieur Francesco was in love with Laura, and afterwards he recovered from his passion, and sang the sorrows of his love. He fell again into the snares of his divinity, and ended his days, loving her not philosophically, but as all men are accustomed to love. You, my most polite Sig. Count, are dedicated to poetry. I would not have you imitate that father of the rhyming Italians in this love affair of yours. If your escape from your chains has been a triumph of virtue, as you tell me, it is to be hoped you will not fall under their bondage again. But whatever may happen in future, the sonnet is good, sententious, vigor-

---

\* I submit this translation of these lines with diffidence, for I never write verses. I wrote to my friend, Wm. Beattie, Esq., of London, a distinguished Italian scholar, to inquire if they had ever been translated, hoping to get a copy to use. He replied he had never heard of any translator of this sonnet. I was thus compelled to make one myself. I have given almost a literal rendering.



ous, and sufficiently correct. I augur well for your poetical career, and for our Piedmontese Parnassus, which needs so much a Poet. I return your *eminentissima Cleopatra*, which is really only a very inferior thing. All the observations made with your hand, are true, and full of good sense. I also send you the two volumes of Plutarch; and if you are at home, I shall join you at dinner to enjoy your sweet society.

With the highest esteem, etc.,      PACIANDI.

The last day of Jan., 1775.

This excellent man had often begged me to undertake a course of Italian reading. Having picked up at a bookstall one day a *Cleopatra* which he entitled *eminentissima*, as it was written by Cardinal Delfino, he remembered I had once told him it seemed to me a good subject for tragedy, and I would like to try it (I had never shown him that first abortion of mine), he brought it to me. In a lucid interval I had the patience to read it, and make marginal notes, and then I sent it back, esteeming it, in plan and effect, decidedly worse than mine would be if I should ever finish it. In the meanwhile Father Paciandi would not discourage me, and he approved of my sonnet, worthless as it may have been. Some months after I plunged into the study of our best poets, and very soon held that sonnet for just what it was worth—nothing at all. I profess, however, a great obligation to that unmerited praise and to the courteous giver, for they stimulated me to merit his honest encomiums.

Some days before the rupture which I foresaw must come on with my mistress, I had fished out from under the cushion of her easy chair my half-finished *Cleopatra* after it had been hid from the light a year. During one of those days of gloom and solitude, in casting my eyes over it, the thought flashed upon me of the resemblance between my state of heart and Antony's; and I said to myself I will go on with this, re-write it if it is not well done, and portray in this tragedy the passions that devour me and have it represented this spring on the stage. In the thought I found life, and I began to scribble, to patch, to alter, to lop off, to add on, to begin again, and in a word, to

grow mad in a different manner, from my unfortunate and ill starred Cleopatra. I was not ashamed to consult some of my friends, who had not, like me, so long neglected the Italian poetry and tongue; and I wearied all who could give me any light upon an art to which I found myself a stranger. Inflamed with no other desire but to learn, and resolute to complete this rash undertaking, my house by degrees was transformed into an academy of literary men. Accident had made me docile, for nature and deep ignorance made me restive and impatient of instruction. Sometimes I despaired, and seemed only to be annoying others and myself without advantage. But this rising impulse was fast exterminating that vile passion from my heart, and awakening once more by slow degrees an intellect that had so long slept. At least I was no longer obliged to resort to the hard and laughable expedient of binding myself down to the chair as I had till then done, to keep me from flying from the house back to my prison, for this had been one of the many expedients I had resorted to, to bring myself by main force back to my senses. The cords were hid by the huge cloak wrapped round me, and having my hands free for reading, writing, or beating my head, my visitors knew not I was chained to the chair. In this plight I passed many hours. Elia, the binder, was the only party to the secret. When I felt the fury of a paroxysm had passed, and could trust myself, I fixed my purpose and motioned for him to unbind me. Thus guarded from these fiery assaults, I at last escaped from plunging again into that awful abyss. But the most whimsical of all my devices was my appearance in masquerade towards the close of the Carnival at the public ball of the theatre. Dressed as Apollo, I presented myself with a lyre playing as well as I could and singing some of my own rhymes. Such impudence was in every respect opposed to my nature. But feeling myself still too weak to confront that rabid passion, I, perhaps, merited some indulgence in playing off such fooleries. They interposed an impassable barrier of shame to prevent me from yielding again to the chains I had so publicly vituperated. I had thus dishonored myself in public, but it was done to escape a still greater disgrace.

But in spite of such follies, I began by degrees to be inflamed with a new, high, and beautiful love of glory. Finally, after some months of continual poetical consultations of worn out grammars, of wearied dictionaries, and accumulated nonsense, I hitched together five things, which I called acts, entitling it all *Cleopatra Tragedia*. When the first act was done, instead of throwing it among the waste paper, I sent it to the benignant Father Paciandi, requesting him to prune it and give me his opinion in writing. His notes were very amusing, and although they fell pretty hard, I could not restrain a hearty laugh. Among others he said of "il latrato del cor" (the barking of the heart), "this metaphor is excessively *canine*, I beg you will leave it out." His notes and his counsels determined me to rewrite it all, with severity and untiring patience. It finally turned out that the same tragedy was represented in Turin, the 16th of June, 1775. In the same way I had teased good Father Paciandi for his criticism, I teased everybody else, particularly Count Agostino Tana, who had been one of the King's pages, while I was in the academy. Our education had been similar, but after leaving the court he had industriously cultivated Italian and French literature. His taste was formed principally in critical philosophy, and not in rhetoric. The point, the grace, and the beauty of his observations upon my unhappy Cleopatra would give the reader many a good laugh if I had the courage to record them, but they would scathe me too badly, and they would not be appreciated without reference to the piece.

I also composed a farce to follow the Cleopatra, and called it "*The Poets*." Neither the farce, however, nor the tragedy were the work of a fool, and a certain blaze of wit shone through both. In *the Poets*, I had introduced myself under the name of Zeusippo, and I was first to deride my Cleopatra, whose shade I evoked from below to give sentence in the company of some other heroines of tragedy upon my own composition, comparing it with some other ridiculous tragedies, which had been the mature offspring of a learned incapacity, while mine was only a premature offspring of ignorant genius.

These two pieces were received with great applause for two successive evenings, and called for the third, but I had already heartily repented of so rash an exposure to the public, although I was treated with the greatest indulgence, and I prayed the actors and the manager to stop any future representation. But from that fatal evening a wild enthusiasm began to flow through every vein of my body, and I burned to bear off one day meritoriously the palm of the stage, as I had never before burned with the flames of love.

Such was my first appearance before the world. If my too numerous dramatic works did not afterwards infinitely surpass these first two compositions, this first rush upon the stage was mad and ridiculous. But if I shall ever be reckoned among the not inferior authors of tragedy and comedy, it will yet be said by him who comes after us, that my burlesque ascent to Parnassus, in pump and buskin, has resulted in a very serious affair. I will here bring the *epoch* of my Youth to a close, since my *Manhood* could not have a more auspicious beginning.

# PERIOD FOURTH.

---

## MANHOOD,

EMBRACING MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS OF DEVOTION  
TO LETTERS.

---

### CHAPTER I.

MY TWO FIRST TRAGEDIES, "FILIPPO," AND "POLENICE," CONCEIVED AND WRITTEN IN FRENCH PROSE—A DELUGE OF RASCALLY RHYMES.

(1775.) HERE I am then, scarcely twenty-seven years old, committed to the public and myself in the responsible position of a tragic author. To sustain so rash a step what was my capital?

A resolute, most obstinate, and indomitable spirit—a heart full to overflowing of passion—a whimsical mixture of love, with all its furies, and a blood-felt indignation and abhorrence of every species of tyranny—an imperfect and indistinct recollection of various French tragedies I had seen performed many years before, for up to that time I had never read, much less reflected on any—a total ignorance of the rules of the drama, and a total incapacity in the divine art of writing well in my own tongue. Over all this was a hard crust of presumption, or rather insufferable petulance, and a headlong character, that made it impossible, except with difficulty, at long intervals, and with convulsive effort, to recognize, to investigate and



listen to the truth. A sort of capital, as the reader clearly sees, more fit to constitute a bad and vulgar piece, than a brilliant author.

But a secret voice made itself heard in the depths of my soul, admonishing me in tones even more solemn than the counsels of my few real friends, "You must go back and become a child again, studying *ex professo* the elements of Grammar, to acquire control over the Italian tongue." I bent my ear to the admonition, and my shoulders to the work, though it was unspeakably painful and mortifying while thinking and feeling like a man, to be obliged once more to study and spell like a boy. But the flame of glory so blazingly shone before me, and the shame of these recorded follies, so strongly goaded me on to cast them from my back for ever, that I girded myself up to face and to conquer these no less powerful than ridiculous obstacles.

The performance of Cleopatra had opened my eyes, I not only saw the intrinsic unfitness of the theme, so incapable of tragic effect, even in the hands of an experienced author, but I saw clearly the immense distance I must retrace my steps, before I could reach the starting point, enter upon the course, and press forward with more or less fortune towards the goal. The veil which had been thrown over me, at last fell from my eyes; I took a solemn oath, I would thenceforth spare neither pain nor fatigue to learn my own language as well as any Italian. And I took this oath because it seemed to me, if I ever learned it well, I should fail neither in fancy nor invention. I now plunged into the grammatical vortex, as Curtius into the Gulf, all armed with a steady gaze. The more clearly I saw I had thus far done everything wrong, the more firmly I believed I should in time do better; I had the proofs of this in my writing desk, my two Tragedies "Filippo," and "Polinicé," which three months before the rehearsal of Cleopatra, I had put into French prose, and read to some few friends, who seemed to be struck with them. Nor was I persuaded of this effect, so much from the praises they bestowed, as the unfeigned attention with which they listened to them to the end, for the silent workings of their excited countenances said more than

their words. But to my great misfortune, whatever may have been the merit of these tragedies, they were conceived and brought forth in French prose, and they had a long and difficult road to travel before reaching Italian Poetry. I had sketched them, in this lean wretched language, not because I knew it, or pretended to know it, but, during five years of travelling, I had talked and heard the jargon spoken, and could wield it a little better; but such was my ignorance of every language, it turned out with me, as it did with one of the first highflyers of Italy, who being infirm, and dreaming to run with his equals, found on the trial, that to gain the victory, he lacked nothing but legs!

Such was the impossibility of translating myself even into Italian prose, that when I read an act or scene, that had before stirred my hearers, they recognized it no longer, and seriously asked me why I had made the change. Another dress and drapery made quite another figure, which could neither be recognized nor tolerated. I raged and wept, but all in vain. I was forced to pluck up patience, and remake:—to swallow down the most stupid and anti-tragical readings of the texts of our tongue, to imprint upon my mind the Tuscan usages, and (but for the awkwardness of the expression) I would say that I was obliged to *unthink* all day in order afterwards to think. But the fact of my having those two future tragedies in my desk made me listen somewhat more patiently to the pedantic counsels that now rained down on me from every quarter. Those two tragedies had also lent me the necessary fortitude for listening to the recital of Cleopatra, so unpleasant to my ears, that every verse the actor pronounced sounded like the bitterest criticism, upon a work which had already lost all its value to me—only as a spur to future exertions. The criticisms (just perhaps in part, but malignant and unlearned) made upon the tragedies of my first edition of Siena, of 1783, by no means disheartened me, neither was I inflated nor convinced by the unmerited applause of the pit at Turin; excited perhaps by compassion for my juvenile confidence. The first step towards Tuscan purity was utterly to banish every kind of French reading. From that July onwards I uttered not a single word of that language, and took special pains to avoid everybody who did.

But I had not begun to Italianize myself. I submitted reluctantly to solid and disciplined studies. Every third day I was on the point of resisting admonition, and flying with my own wings. Every thought that struck my fancy I tried to clothe in verse, and I attempted every measure, experiencing in all mortification of pride, but never diminution of hope. Among other rhymes (I will not call them poetry), I wrote a piece, to be sung by myself at a banquet of Free Masons. This was, or at least I intended it should be, a Chapter, descriptive of different instruments, ranks, and offices, of that buffoon society. Although in my first sonnet I had stolen a verse from Petrarch, yet such was my inattention and ignorance I began the piece without recollecting it, or without ever having carefully observed the measure of the *terzina*, and thus I went on blundering to the twelfth *terzina*, when a doubt springing up I opened Dante and discovering my mistake, immediately corrected it, but I left the twelve *terzine* as they stood, and sang them so at the banquet. But these Free Masons understood as little of rhymes and poetry as of the art of building, and my Capitolo passed muster.

(1775.) Feeling I was leading too distracted a life in town, I retired in the month of August to the mountains which separate Piedmont and the Dauphiné, and passed two months in a little hamlet called *Cezannes*, at the foot of Mont Genève, where Hannibal is supposed to have crossed the Alps. Subject to rash impulses, I forgot in taking that step that among those mountains I shall again plunge into the midst of the cursed French language, which I had so properly determined to fly from for ever. But the suggestion had come from the Abbé who accompanied me the year before in that ludicrous journey to Florence. He was a native of *Cezannes*. His name was Ailland—full of genius and wit, and accomplished in Latin and French Literature. He had been tutor to two brothers I had been intimate with in the academy where we formed an acquaintance that afterwards grew into intimacy. In my early youth the Abbé had done all he could to inspire me with the love of letters, promising me success—but all in vain. We had often made strange bargains. He read to me a

whole hour from the *Novelliere* of "The Thousand and One Nights," and I in return consented to hear myself read ten minutes a fragment of *Racine*. I was all ears while he read the silly stuff, and afterwards nodded to the sound of the harmonious verses of that great Tragedian. This made Ailland furious, and he scolded me with great reason. Such had been my inclination to become a tragic poet, while I was in the first apartment of the Royal Academy! I have never since, it is true, been able to swallow the insipid, monotonous, frigid sing-song of French verse. It never seemed to me to be poetry—before I knew what a verse was, or even afterwards when I thought I understood something about it.

But to return to my summer seclusion at *Cezannes*. Besides the literary Abbé, I had a musical Abbé, who taught me to play the guitar, an instrument which inspires poesy, and for which I had some inclination; but my perseverance did not equal my transport on hearing the music. I had studied the harp in my youth, but even in this I never surpassed mediocrity, although I possessed in the highest degree an ear and taste for music. Thus passed the summer with the two Abbés. While one of them, in playing the harp, relieved the pain to me so new of application to study, the other made me send him to the devil with his French. But these were useful and delightful hours; I learned to retire within myself and reflect, and began efficiently to unrust my poor intellect, and unfold my powers, which, during those ten years of continual disgraceful sloth, had become deadened beyond all power of conception. I girded myself to translate into Italian prose and phrases, "Il Filippo," and "Il Polinisi," born in a spurious dress. But in spite of all my efforts these two tragedies always remained amphibious things, half way between French and Italian, without being one or the other, as says our Poet of the burning paper.

"Un color bruno  
Che non é nero ancora e il bianco muore."  
A brown color  
Which is not yet black, and where the white dies.



In this struggle of making Italian verses out of French thoughts, I was now painfully exhausted in remodelling, for the third time, my Cleopatra. Some scenes I had read in French to my tragic, but not grammatical, censor, Count Agostino Tana, and he had esteemed them nervous and beautiful, particularly that of Antony with Augustus. But when they were transformed into my miserable Italian, feeble, canting, and monotonous, they seemed to him less than *mediocre*, and he frankly told me so. I believed his words, and more, I felt their truth. So true is it that in every poem the dress makes half the body, and in Lyric poetry, the all. Some verses that

“Con la lor vanità che par persona,”

surpass others, in which

“Fosser gemme legate in vile anello,”

Let me here say that both to Padre Paciandi, and the Count Tana, particularly to the latter, I will acknowledge for ever a high debt of gratitude for the truth they told me, and for making me by main force feel the noble love of letters. Such was my confidence in these two persons, that my literary destiny has been entirely at their arbitration, and at the least sign of their disapproval I would have cast into the fire every composition I had, as I did many rhymes which deserved no better correction. If I have become a poet, I ought to say so by the grace of God, and of Paciandi, and of Tana. These were my protecting saints, in the long ferocious battle I was forced to wage for the first year of my literary life, of giving the chase to French words and phrases, of denuding my ideas, to reclothe them again—of uniting, in a word, at the same moment the study of a mature man with that of a mere boy in a primary school—a labor so indescribably fatiguing and disagreeable (I am bold to say), as would have overcome any mind in which burned a flame less ardent than in my own.

After translating the two tragedies, I set myself to the task of reading and studying verse by verse in their order all our great poets, and making signs on the margin to indicate the emotion I experienced. Finding Dante too difficult, I began



with Tasso, whom I had never opened till that moment, and read with such intensity, anxious to observe so many, so different, and such opposite things, that after ten stanzas I knew nothing I had been reading, and was more exhausted than if I had composed them myself. But by degrees I trained my eye and mind to that laborious study, and thus I went entirely through Tasso, "*La Gerusalemme*," afterwards Ariosto, "*Il Furioso*," then "*Dante*," without commentaries, then Petrarch, on all of which I wrote marginal notes. This task occupied me a year. The historical difficulties I met with in Dante I cared little about understanding—those of expression, or sentiment, or style, excited all my powers. I was often unsuccessful, but those I conquered inspired me with the greater satisfaction. In this first reading I forced myself rather into an indigestion than into the real quintessence of those four great Luminaries, but I thus prepared myself to understand them well in subsequent readings, and to dissect, taste, and perhaps imitate them.

I found Petrarch, however, still more difficult than Dante, and at first liked him less, for we are robbed of the chief pleasure of the poets, while a struggle is necessary to understand them. Obligated to write in blank verse, I sought for the best models. The translation of Statius by Bentivoglio was recommended. I read it with great avidity. I studied and took notes of it all, but the structure of the verse seemed too weak to suit tragic dialogue. Afterwards my censor friends put into my hands Cesarotti's Ossian. His blank verse entirely captivated me, and I was persuaded that with some little modification it would form an excellent model for dialogue verse. I was anxious to read some other tragedies, Italian or translations from the French, hoping at least to learn something about style, but their feebleness, triviality, and prolixity, disgusted me. Among the least exceptionable, I read and made notes of four translations of Paradisi, from the French, and "*La Merope*," in the original, by Maffei. The style, in various passages particularly, pleased me very well, although it fell far below the standard I had fixed in my own fancy. Very frequently I asked myself, "Why is it that our divine language,

so masculine, so energetic, and ever so terrible in the mouth of Dante, must become so feeble and effeminate in the drama? Why is it that Cesarotti, who versifies so powerfully in Ossian, sermonizes so feebly in Semiramis, and the Mahommet of Voltaire he translates? Why has the pompous and Frenchified Trugoni, the head of the blank verse school, fallen, in his translation of Radamiste of Crebillon, so immeasurably below his author, and even himself? I will certainly lay the blame everywhere, rather than upon our soft and Proteform tongue." These doubts I expressed to my friends and censors, but none of them could solve them. The excellent Paciandi enjoined me not to neglect my laborious readings of prose, which he learnedly denominated the nurse of verse. I was more inclined to regard his counsel, for one day he brought me "*Il Galateo del Casa*," recommending it as well worthy of attention, not only from its style, but its pure Tuscan. From a child, like everybody else, I had read it carelessly, understanding it little, and feeling it less, and I was almost offended at this puerile and pedantic advice. I opened it full of spite, and at the sight of that first "*Conciossiacosache*," followed by that long period so pompous and destitute of wit, I went into a fit of rage, and hurled the book out of the window, screaming out, "How intolerable it is that I should be obliged, in writing tragedies at the age of twenty-seven, to swallow down again such nonsense, and wither up my brain with such pedantries." He smiled at my undisciplined fury, and prophesied I should afterwards read *Galateo* more than once. And in fact I did, but some years after, when my shoulders had been well hardened, and my neck trained to bear the grammatical yoke, I not only read and made notes of *Galateo*, but nearly all our prose writers of the fourteenth century, with what advantage I cannot say. But the fact is, whoever reads them thoroughly, and avails himself with judgment and address of their modes of writing, discarding the dross, will, perhaps, after his own works, philosophical, poetical, or historical, give a richness, brevity, propriety, and power of coloring to his style, in which, till now, I have never seen any Italian writer clothe himself. It is a thankless and laborious

task, and he who has the genius and the capacity to know how to profit by it would be unwilling to endure it, and he who has not these two qualities would labor in vain.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### I AGAIN PUT MYSELF UNDER THE PEDAGOGUE TO STUDY HORACE-- FIRST LITERARY JOURNEY TO TUSCANY.

I HAD now been deeply absorbed for more than six months in Italian studies. In the beginning of the year 1776 I began to feel an honest and burning shame that I was so entirely ignorant of the Latin tongue. I was obliged to skip over even the briefest quotations I met with from that language. French reading I had abandoned. Shut up to Italian, I was deprived of all aid in dramatic reading. This, among other reasons, induced me to take up the Latin in earnest. I wished to be able to read the Tragedies of Seneca, some of whose sublime passages had enraptured me. I was also anxious to read the Latin translations of the Greek Tragedians, which are generally more faithful and less tedious than our Italian.

Armed with a firm resolution, I found a good master, who put Phædrus into my hand. To his great surprise, and my own deep shame, I did not understand those simple Fables, although I had translated them in my tenth year, and I was detected in the most shameful blunders. But the valiant pedagogue, after this satisfactory trial both of my *asshood* and my tenacious resolution, confidently encouraged me, and instead of leaving me to go on with Phædrus, gave me Horace, saying, ‘From the difficult we go on to the easy, and this will be something more worthy of you. Let us perpetrate our follies upon this stern Prince of the Latin Lyrics, and this will prepare the way to descend to others.’ And so we did. A Horace without notes or comments was taken up, and fooling, construing, guessing, and blundering on, I gave a verbal transla-

tion of all the Odes from the beginning of January to the end of March. This study cost me immense labor, but it paid me well, for I recovered my grammar without giving up my poetry.

But I did not abandon the Italian Poets. I read and made notes of Politian and Casa, and took up the great Poets once more from the beginning. I read and took notes of Dante and Petrarch, five times in four years.

From time to time I tried to write tragic verses, and had already versified "*Il Filippo*," but although I had made it somewhat less feeble and contemptible than *Cleopatra*, yet the versification still seemed languid, prolix, fastidious, and trivial. And, in fact, this first Filippo, which afterwards in print was satisfied with troubling the public with only 1400 and some odd verses, in the two first attempts persisted in troubling and harassing its author with more than 2000, in which he said much less than he said afterwards in 1400.

That tediousness and feebleness of style which I attributed very much more to my ignorance than to my intellect, at last convinced me I could never speak Italian well till I had forgotten French, and I determined to go to Tuscany to accustom myself to talk, to hear, to think, to dream in Tuscan for ever. I set out in April, '76, flattering myself a stay of six months would *un-Frenchify* me. But six months do not obliterate a bad habit of more than ten years' standing. I took the route to Piacenza and Parma by a slow gait, now in a cart, now on horseback, in the company of my Pocket Poets, with very little luggage, only three horses, two servants, my guitar, and many hopes of a glorious future. By means of Paciandi I became acquainted with the most distinguished men of letters in Parma, Modena, Bologna, and Tuscany. I now courted their society as earnestly as I had before shunned it. I became acquainted in Parma with our celebrated printer, Bodoni, and his was the first printing office in which I had set my feet, although I had been at Madrid and Birmingham, which contain two of the most celebrated printing establishments in Europe. I had never seen a metallic *a*, nor one of those engines which were in after times to win for me either fame or contempt. I could not have hit upon a nobler printing office, or found a more



amiable, skilful, and ingenious illustrator of that wonderful art than Bodoni.\*

Once aroused from my long and shameful lethargy, I began gradually to open my eyes upon the domain of learning. I felt the infinite importance of ascertaining the scope of my intellectual powers, that I might not mistake my proper sphere. But I was less a novice in this study of myself than in other things, for I had rather anticipated than waited for the age of reflection. I had sometimes undertaken to read my own moral being by thought and by writing. I still preserve a diary in which for some months I had the perseverance to record not only my follies day by day, but my thoughts and the motives of my words and actions, hoping that by seeing myself in so dull a mirror, I could make some improvement. I had commenced this diary in French—I continued it in Italian—badly written in both, but rather original in its thoughts and feelings. I soon, however, got tired of it, and I did well to abandon it, for I wasted time and ink, and found myself every day worse than the day before. But the fact serves to show that I understood pretty well the extent of my literary capacity. Seeming then to discern fully what I lacked, and the little I possessed by nature, I philosophized still more to discern those things I could acquire altogether, those only in part, and those I could not acquire at all. If this study was a failure in other respects, it kept me from attempting any kind of composition I did not feel drawn to by any irresistible impulse—an impulse whose urgings make every production in the Fine Arts, however imperfect it may be, always superior to those works which are the fruit of urging and forced impulses, however free the latter may seem to be from positive blemishes.

At Pisa I became acquainted with the most distinguished professors, and gathered from them all that might be of service to my art. I experienced in my intercourse with them great

---

\* Bodoni's Printing Establishment was long the most celebrated in Italy. He published superb editions of the Greek, the Roman, the French, the Spanish, and Italian Classics, which now command the highest prices all over Europe.



difficulty in managing matters with dexterity enough not to unmask my ignorance too plainly, and, to borrow a metaphor from the convent, to appear to them a Professed, while I was only a Novice. Not that I wished to affect to be learned, but I was so entirely in the dark about so many, and still so many things I felt ashamed among strangers, for in proportion as the darkness dispersed, my fatal and obstinate ignorance seemed to be growing more and more gigantic. But not less gigantic was my boldness; for while I paid due homage to the learning of others, I was not at all alarmed at my own ignorance, being well convinced that to write tragedies, the first great requisition is to *feel* intensely, which cannot be *acquired*. It only remained for me to learn how (and this was certainly no trifle), to make others feel what I felt myself.

During the six or seven weeks I spent at Pisa, I *idiated* and *extended* in respectable Tuscan prose the tragedy of *Antigone*, and versified the *Polinice*, which I read to some of the "*big men*"\* of the university, who appeared to like it very well; here and there they criticised a verbal expression, but never with proper severity. Some things were happily expressed, but the piece as a whole was, in my judgment, still feeble, diffuse, and trivial; in the judgment of the *Barbassori* it was sometimes incorrect, but they said it was flowing and musical. We were not agreed. What I called feeble and trivial, they called flowing and musical; as for the blunders, being pure matters of fact, and not of taste, there could be no dispute. Neither in matters of taste did we dispute; for a marvel, I maintained my part as a learner as they did theirs of teachers. But I was firmly resolved to be satisfied myself. Those gentlemen taught me negatively what *I must not* do. Time, exercise, perseverance, and study, I flattered myself would finally teach me what I *must* do. If I wished to excite a smile at the expense of those doctors, as they probably did many a one at mine, I could name one of the most overbearing of them who brought me the *Fancia* of Buonarotti, recommending it, I will not say as a model, but as

---

\*In the original *barbassori*, which the Italians use as we sometimes do the term *big-men*—often with a tinge of sarcasm.

a help in my dramatic studies, telling me I should find in it vast stores of language and style. He would have made a match for the fellow who proposed to an historical painter the study of *Collotta*.\* Others praised the style of Metastasio as the best for tragedy—some that of others. But the fact is, none of those doctors knew much about tragedy.

During my residence in Pisa I translated Horace's Art of Poetry into prose, with clearness and simplicity, to stamp upon my memory his frank and ingenious precepts. I devoted myself also to the Tragedies of Seneca, although I saw very clearly they were in opposition to the precepts of Horace. But I was so enraptured with some of his sublime passages, I tried to render them into blank verse, to improve me in Latin and Italian versifying and extending. These trials showed me the immense difference between the iambic and the epic verse; their different measures, demonstrating the advantages of dialogue over every other sort of poetry. I also saw that the Italians have only the verse of eleven feet for all the epic compositions. It became necessary to *create* a measure to break up the monotony of sounds; a phraseology of brevity and power distinguishing the tragic blank verse from every other, and from rhyme, either epic or lyric. Seneca's iambics produced this conviction, and perhaps in either part furnished me with the means of doing it; for some of his noblest and most vigorous passages owe half their sublimity to his broken and unmusical metre. Who so destitute of feeling and ear, as not to perceive the grand difference between these two verses, one from Virgil, who would charm his reader:

“Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.”

The other from Seneca, who wishes to astonish and terrify his reader by characterizing in two words two different personages:

“Concede mortem . . . \*  
Si recusares, darem.”

For this same reason an Italian tragic author must never, in his more impassioned parts, put verses in the mouth of his speakers,

---

\* A landscape painter of the fifteenth century of little merit

which resemble in sound those otherwise magnificent lines of our Epic :

Chiama gli abitator dell' ombre eterne,  
Il ranco suon della Tartarea tromba."

Convinced in my very heart, of the necessity of preserving this grand difference between the two styles, so much the more difficult for Italians, since we must create it ourselves in the limits of the same metre, I paid less attention to what the sages of Pisa said about the depth of the dramatic art, and the style to be adopted. But I listened with humility and patience to their grammatical Tuscan ; although, in this respect, the Tuscans of our times do not greatly excel.

Less than a year from the performance of *Cleopatra*, I found myself the possessor of the little patrimony of three other tragedies. For truth's sake I will here confess from what fountains I drew them. As for "*Il Filippo*," born French, and child of the French, I had several years before read something similar in the romance of *Don Carlos*, by the Abbé Saint Real. "*Il Polinice*," also Gallic, I drew from the "*Rival Brothers*" of Racine. "*L' Antigone*," unsoiled at first with exotic origin, I got by reading the 12th book of Statius, in Bentivoglio's translation. Some passages from Racine, and others from the seven Prodi of Æschylus, translated by Father *Brumoy*, had found their way into my *Polinice*, and I made a vow I would never read the tragedies of another man, on a subject I was writing about, before I had written my own : for I was determined not to contract the stain of plagiarism—and sink or swim for myself. He who reads much before composing steals without knowing it, and loses his originality, if he ever had any. On this account I had the year before abandoned even Shakspeare ; but as I was obliged to read him in the French, it gave me less regret. I was not blind to that great author's defects—but the more he fired my blood, the more I denied myself the luxury of reading him.

*Antigone* was no sooner in prose, than the reading of Seneca inflamed me to idiate, at the same time, the two twin tragedies, *L'Agemennone*, and *L'Oreste*. But in spite of all this, I think I

stole nothing from Seneca. At the end of June I left Pisa for Florence, where I stayed through September. I now applied myself vigorously to acquire the vernacular tongue. Conversing daily with the Florentines I got on very well. I now began to *think* almost exclusively, in that most rich and elegant tongue—the first indispensable pre-requisite for writing it well. During my stay at Florence I versified “*Filippo*” the second time from beginning to end, without any regard to my first versification: for I wrote from the prose. But so slow was my progress, I often seemed to be going back rather than advancing. One morning in August, happening to be with a clique of *litterati*, I heard some casual allusion made to the historical anecdote of Don Garzia being killed by his own father, Cosimo I. I was struck with the circumstance, and as it is not printed, I procured the manuscript from the Public Archives of Florence, and adapted the tragedy. I continued, however, scribbling away rhymes by the quantity—all worthless. I had no friendly censor at Florence equal to Tana and Pacianti; but I had good sense enough to give no copy of them away, and even the moderation to recite them only to a few. But my bad success in rhyming, so far from discouraging me, only convinced me I ought never to give up reading and learning by heart the best poets, to familiarize myself perfectly with poetical forms. And during the summer I loaded my brain with verses from Petrarch, Dante, Tasso, and even the first three entire cantos of Ariosto; for I was sure the day would come when all these forms and phrases would come forth from the crucible, blended, and identified with my own thoughts and feelings.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### DEVOTION TO HARD STUDY.

I RETURNED to Turin in October, not because I presumed to have already thoroughly Tuscanized myself, but I had made

no arrangement to stay any longer from home. But other frivolous reasons influenced me to return. I had left all my horses at Turin, and this passion, which contrasted so strangely with the Muses, was not yet rooted out. I had not yet either yielded myself up to the fascinations of study and glory, so entirely, as to forget my mania for amusement; and I could more easily indulge it at Turin, where I had a fine house, clients of every sort, horses a plenty, dissipations and friends more than enough.

But all these obstacles relaxed my study not a whit—my occupations and undertakings even increased during the winter. After completing Horace, I had read and studied inch by inch Sallust and others. The brevity and elegance of this historian so completely ravished me, that I applied myself with earnestness to translate him, and before spring my work was done. I owe much, nay, infinite obligation to that work, which many, many times, I afterwards remade, and changed, and filed down, I know not if with any improvement to the work, but certainly with great profit to myself in understanding the Latin, and giving me power over the Italian.\*

In the meantime, the incomparable Abbé Tommaso di Caluso returned from Portugal, and finding me, contrary to his expectation, truly engulfed in literature, and obstinately bent upon the rugged design of becoming a tragic author, he seconded me, counselling and aiding me to all his lights with indescribable benignity and friendship. I experienced also the same attention from the learned Count S. Rafaele, whose acquaintance I formed that year, and other exquisite scholars, all my superiors in age, in learning and knowledge of my Art. They pitied and encouraged me, although the ardor of my character hardly needed a new impulse. But I feel and always shall, the deepest gratitude towards all these men, for having so generously borne my intolerable petulance; although I may safely say it was diminishing day by day, as I gained light.

Towards the close of this year ('76), I experienced a very

---

\* This work is regarded by Italian scholars, as one of the finest specimens of translations ever made in Italy.



great and long desired consolation. One morning, in visiting, Tana, to whom I had been accustomed, always palpitating and trembling, to carry my rhymes as soon as written, I took with me a sonnet in which he found little to laugh at, and even much to praise. "These," said he, "are the first verses you ever wrote worthy of the name." After the numberless and continued afflictions and mortifications I had experienced in reading to him for more than a year my deformed rhymes, which he had criticised like a true and generous friend, without mercy, telling me his reasons and satisfying me with them—any one can imagine the satisfaction I felt at these new praises. The sonnet was a description of the rape of Ganymede, in imitation of the inimitable lines of Cassiani, on the rape of Proserpine. It is the first of my printed rhymes. Flushed with hope, I wrote two others in the same style. The entire three bore a little too strongly the servile impress of their origin; but (if I do not err), they were written with a degree of perspicuity and elegance, I had never attained before. I printed them, with slight alterations after many years. After three passable sonnets, a new fountain was unsealed, and too many others issued forth. Most of them were on amatory themes; but they were never inspired by love. Merely for exercise of language and rhyme, I undertook to describe one by one, the charms of an amiable and beautiful *Signora*; but without a spark of love in my heart, as will be easily discovered in the Sonnets. However, as the versification was tolerable, I give them their place among my rhymes. *Connoisseurs* can refer to them to note the progress I was making in the difficult art of good expression, without which no sonnet, however well conceived and embellished, can ever have life.

(1777.) I had now made some progress in rhyming. Salust's prose I had translated with great brevity, and sufficient perspicuity, but without that varied harmony all its own—and my heart burned with hope. But as all my efforts had, from the beginning, contemplated but one point,—the formation of an appropriate and powerful tragic style, I endeavored, through these secondary occupations, only to near the goal for which I was aiming. In April of '77 I versified *L'Antigone*, idioted and

extended at the same time the year before, at Pisa. I versified it entirely in less than three weeks, with so much facility, I flattered myself I had achieved a triumph. But I had no sooner read it in a Literary Society, which assembled almost every evening, than I repented of what I had done; for although it was praised by others, to my deep grief I found myself still infinitely removed from that powerful style I had made my ideal, seldom as I may ever afterwards have reached it. The praises of my learned and friendly auditors persuaded me it might be a tragedy in its passions and management; but my ears and intellect convinced me it was not a tragedy in its style. None of them could, at the first reading, be so competent a judge as myself, for the suspense, agitation, and curiosity an unknown tragedy bears along with it are such that even the hearer of taste cannot, and will not, and ought not particularly to criticise the style. If it be tolerable it escapes criticism. But I knew it so well, I could tell beforehand when the thought or the sentiment was betrayed or lessened from the want of truth, fervor, brevity, or strength.

Persuaded I had not reached my point, and never should in Turin, where I was leading too distracted a life, I resolved to return to Tuscany, where I should more perfectly Italianize myself, and be alone with my art. I had not spoken French in Turin, but our Piedmontese jargon, which I spoke and heard continually, was of no service in aiding me to think and write Italian.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### SECOND LITERARY JOURNEY TO TUSCANY—FRIENDSHIP WITH GANDELLINI—WORKS IN SIENA.

I SET out the first of May, after obtaining the necessary permission of the King to leave his most happy realm. The Minister to whom I applied remarked I had been only the year before to Tuscany. "For that very reason," I answered, "I am anx-

ious to return." I obtained the permission; but that minister's words sank into my soul, and gave me a hint I carried fully into effect in less than a year, which made me a freeman. I intended to remain longer during my second visit, and mixing the dreams of folly with my deliriums of true glory, I determined to take with me a train of horses and servants, for acting the two parts of Poet and Gentleman.

With a train of eight horses, and other things to correspond, I set out on my route to Genoa. Embarking there with my carriage and baggage, I sent on the horses by land to Lerici and Sarzana, where they arrived safely. After getting nearly in sight of Lerici, our felucca was driven back by the wind, and we were forced to land at Rapallo, only two posts from Genoa. Tired out in waiting for a favorable wind, I left the felucca and my goods, and taking some shirts and my manuscripts (from which I never separated), I set out with one servant, on horseback, over those neck-breaking roads across the bare Appenines, and reached Sarzana, where I found my horses. Here I was now obliged to wait more than eight days for the felucca. My horses were with me, but having no books but my little Horace and a pocket Petrarch, I found my stay at Sarzana tedious enough.

I borrowed from a priest, the brother of the Postmaster, a Livy, which (after leaving the schools, where I had never understood or relished him) had never fallen into my hands. I was passionately fond of the brevity of the Sallustian style, yet the sublimity of the subjects, the majesty of the orations of Livy, impressed me exceedingly. The story of Virginia, and the inflaming words of Icilius, so transported me, I idiated a Tragedy, and I would immediately have extended it, had I not been irritated by waiting for that cursed felucca.

For the intelligence of the reader, I will here explain these words I have occasion to use so often: *ideare* (idiate), *stendere* (extend), and *versigiare* (versify). These three stages (or breathings, *respiri*), with which I have always given existence to my tragedies, have generally procured me the benefit of time so necessary for pondering well a composition of such importance, which, if once commenced badly, is afterwards

improved only with great difficulty. To *idiate*, then, I understand to distribute the subject into acts and scenes, to establish and fix the number of persons, and in two leaves of prose draw a plan, scene by scene, of all the characters are to say and do. To *extend*, I mean, to take up again that first sheet, and following the hints laid down, fill up the scenes in prose dialogue, until the tragedy is entire, without rejecting any idea that is striking, and writing with all the power I possess, without any regard to criticism. By *versifying* I mean not only the rendering of the prose into verse, but discerning with a mind that has reposed from the subject, the best thoughts, and rejecting the false matter of the first hurried effort. Then follows, as in every other composition, the necessary filing, pruning, and changing. But if the tragedy is not first *idiated* and *extended*, no certain progress will be made by subsequent labors. I have observed this mechanism in all my dramatic compositions, beginning with *Filippo*, and I am well persuaded it constitutes more than two thirds of the labor. In fact, after an interval has passed sufficient to have obliterated the recollection of the first distribution of scenes, if in taking up the sheet I feel rushing into my heart and fancy a tumult of thoughts and affections which compel me to write, I begin immediately to work up the materials excavated from the very heart of the subject. If this enthusiasm is not as great or greater than when I *idiated*, I change my plan, or give it to the flames. If the first idea is good, the sketching is rapidly done, and writing an act a day, sometimes more, rarely less, generally on the sixth day the tragedy is, I will not say done, but born. I have admitted no other judge but my own feelings. All those I have not thus *idiated* with enthusiasm, I have never finished, or if I *extended* them I never put them in verse. This was the case with *Carlo Primo*, which I began, after *Filippo*, to *extend* in French. The third act was not more than half sketched before I became so chilled in heart and hand, I could not bring my pen to finish it. So it was, too, with *Romeo and Juliette*, which I *extended* entirely but with great effort, and at intervals. Taking up the unhappy thing some months after, I felt such a ter-



rible revulsion as I read it over, and was inflamed with such rage I threw it into the fire.

This method I have here described in so prolix a manner, produced the following result. My Tragedies, taken as a whole, with all their defects, have the merit of being or of appearing to most readers, of having been made at once—to have been combined together at a single blow, and every word, thought and action of the five acts, is interwoven closely with every thought, word and disposition of the preceding. This begets attention in the hearer, and heat in the action. When a tragedy is thus extended, nothing remains for the author, but quietly to go on with the versification, separating the gold from the ore; and the solicitude which the labor of versification and the unsatisfied passion of elegance usually give to the author's mind, in no degree lessen the transport and fervor he must so implicitly yield himself to, in idiating and creating touching and terrible things. If those who come after me judge I have more effectually than others attained my object, the present digression may aid some one who professes this art. Where I have been mistaken, it will serve others in the invention of better methods.

But to resume the thread of my narrative. That long expected felucca at last arrived at Lerici, and I set out immediately for Sarzana and Pisa. I had, in the meantime, augmented my poetical stock by Virginia, a theme which fired my blood. I resolved now to pass only two days in Pisa, flattering myself I could profit vastly more in the language at Siena, where the Italian is spoken much better, and there are fewer foreigners.\*

---

\* There is no portion of Italy where the Italian is spoken with so much purity, brevity and elegance, as at Siena. This is not only true of the learned and polite, but of all classes. The poorest peasants, and the most neglected children, have the clearest and most musical pronunciation. The traveller who has been accustomed to the comparatively elegant pronunciation of Romans and Florentines, stands in mute astonishment and delight, to hear the silver tones of a Sienese peasant. Alfieri is not the only celebrated Italian author who has



Besides, during my visit at Pisa the year before, I had been half captivated with a beautiful, rich and noble Signora, whom I could have married, had I wished. But I was now a little wiser than I was some years before, in Turin, when I consented my brother-in-law should sue for a girl who rejected me at last; for now I would not let them sue for one who desired it. Her character combined everything desirable, and she certainly pleased me. But now I was eight years older—had seen nearly all Europe—was inflamed with the love of glory and the passion for study, the necessity of being free to become an intrepid and genuine author,—all these powerful obstacles rung this warning in my ear:—"Under a tyranny it is enough and even too much to live single; and you *never* ought to become a husband and a father."

So I crossed the Arno, and soon found myself in Siena. I have always blessed the day I saw that city, for I found there a circle of six or seven learned men of sound judgment and cultivation hardly credible in so small a community. The excellent Francesco Gori Gandellini infinitely surpassed them all. I have often mentioned him in my writings, and his sweet memory will never fade from my heart. Similarity of character, of thinking and feeling, the more praiseworthy in him than in me, as his circumstances were so different from mine, and a reciprocal want of some one to pour out our hearts to, overflowing with the same passions, soon united us in true and ardent friendship. The sacred bond of pure friendship is a want of the first necessity; but my peevish and rugged nature renders me and will render me as long as I live, little apt to inspire it in others, and beyond measure cautious in confiding to them my own. For this reason, I have had very few friends, but I pride myself upon having had all good ones, enough more estimable than myself. All I ever sought in friendship was a mutual outpouring of human weaknesses that

---

gone to Siena to perfect himself in his own tongue. It is said to be the only country in the world, where the same language and the same pronunciation are heard among all classes, from the saloon to the hovel.

the judgment and amiableness of my friend might be transfused into my soul, bettering everything unworthy, confirming everything right, and ennobling everything praiseworthy and honorable. In my literary pursuits the frank and generous counsels of Gandellini inspired me with the highest impulses. The ardent desire I felt of meriting the esteem of this rare man, gave me a new mental elasticity of intellect, and I felt no peace unless I was producing some valuable work which seemed worthy of him. To win and merit the praise of a man so estimable in my eyes as Gori, I betook myself during that summer to work with an ardor greater than ever. He first suggested to me the idea of dramatizing the Conspiracy of the Pazzi. I was entirely ignorant of the facts, and he recommended me to consult Machiavelli in preference to every other historian.\* Thus by a strange combination that divine author, afterwards one of my dearest pastimes, was again placed in my hand by another true friend, similar in many things to my so much beloved *D'Acunha*, but much more learned and cultivated than he. And in fact, although I was poorly prepared to appreciate that noble and lofty historian, yet during that same July I read many portions of his histories besides the conspiracy of the Pazzi. I idlied the tragedy at once, and fired by his original racy style, I felt constrained for several days to abandon every other study, and write at one stroke two books on tyranny.† That was an ebullition of a boiling spirit wounded from infancy by abhorred and universal oppression. Had I treated this theme at a riper age, I should have written with more learning, and corroborated my opinions from History. But in printing it I would not let the frost of years, and the pedantry of my meagre learning, weaken the flame of youth and of noble and just indignation which burns on every page of that work. It was filled with mistakes and redundancies, the offspring of inexperience, but I let them

---

\* See the beginning of the 8th Book, 2nd vol. of Machiavelli's Florentine Histories ; No. 3 of the Medici Series.

† In this bold, earnest Treatise, Alfieri has poured out all the indignation of his soul against Tyranny and Tyrants.

pass as they were written. No selfish end, no personal vengeance dictated that writing. Perhaps I may have judged falsely, may have cherished too much passion. But when was the passion for the true and the right too strongly felt, especially if we wish to excite it in others? I only said what I felt, and probably less than more. And at that fervid age judging and reasoning are, perhaps, nothing more than pure and generous feelings.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### A WORTHY AFFECTION AT LAST ENSNARES ME FOR EVER.

My soul, which had so long been heated with an innate hatred of tyranny, had now boiled over, and I betook myself once more to dramatic pursuits. I read the Manuscript to my friend and a few others, sealed it up, laid it away, and thought no more of it for many years. I again put on the buskin, and at a single stroke extended *L'Agamennone*, *L'Oreste*, and *La Virginia*. At first I had some doubt about extending Orestes, but I unburdened it to my friend, who dispelled it at once. I had idiatised it the year before at Pisa, and the reading of the detestable Agamemnon of Seneca had inspired me with the subject. During the winter at Turin, in turning over my books one day, I opened a volume of the Tragedies of *Voltaire* where the first word I saw was *Oreste*, *Tragedy*. I immediately shut the book, piqued at finding such a composition by a modern writer, for I knew not it had an existence. I made some inquiry about it, and my friends told me it was one of the best tragedies of that author; which considerably abated my ardor in giving body to my own. I extended my Agamemnon at Siena without even opening that of Seneca. When I was on the point of extending *Orestes*, I spoke to Gori about Voltaire's, and begged of him the loan of it, intending to glance it over, and then finish mine or throw it aside. He refused and said,

“Write yours first! and if you are born to make tragedies yours will be either worse, or better, or equal to that, but at all events it will be your own.” I did so. That high and noble counsel I always regarded. Whenever I took up subjects that had been treated by modern writers I never read them till I had extended and versified my own. If I had seen them on the stage I tried to forget them as entirely as possible,—but if they would obtrude themselves I made mine as different as possible in every respect. The result has been, if on the whole I have not borne myself nobly in tragedy, I have not leaned on others.

The five months I passed at Siena proved a balm to my intellect and my spirit. Besides these compositions, I continued with resolution and advantage the study of the Latin classics, and among others Juvenal, which I afterwards read as often as Horace. Winter, which is disagreeable in Siena, was coming on, and not being yet entirely cured of my impatient disposition, I determined in October to visit Florence, without being fully decided to pass the winter or return to Turin. And yet I had scarcely been there a month when the circumstance occurred which held me there for many years. I was determined to expatriate myself for ever, and the merest accident became the occasion of my assuming those voluntary and golden chains that acquired for me my last literary freedom, without which I should never have done anything well, if, indeed, I have now succeeded.

During the previous summer, which I passed at Florence, I had frequently met a most accomplished and beautiful lady,\* who, being a distinguished foreigner, could not pass unobserved, and being seen she could not but captivate. The nobility of Florence, and all foreigners of birth, were in rivalry for her. I was buried in my studies, and melancholy, and solitary by nature, careful always to shun the most captivating and beautiful; I had therefore taken no measures to be introduced at her house, but at the theatres and on the public walks

---

\* Alfieri here introduces Louisa de Stolberg, Countess of Albany, who was wife of the last of the Stuarts, who made pretensions to the throne of England.

I saw her frequently. The first impression I received of her had been pleasing, and I had not forgotten her. Sweet, flashing, dark eyes, united (which is rarely seen) with the purest complexion, and fair hair, gave to her beauty a brilliancy difficult to withstand. Twenty-five years of age, with a taste for the beautiful arts and letters, a golden character, and despite painful domestic trials to which fortune had abandoned her, still amiable and cheerful—such charms were too powerful to resist. During the autumn, one of my acquaintances often proposed to introduce me. I thought myself sufficiently secure, and I risked an interview. I had ample warning, but I was captivated. But vacillating still between the yes and the no of this new passion, I posted to Rome on horseback in December. It was a mad journey; its only fruit was my Sonnet on Rome, which I wrote one night in a low tavern of Baccano, where I could not close my eyes. It consumed about twelve days. I passed Siena twice, and I saw my friend Gori again, who did not discourage me from yielding to those new chains in which I was already more than half bound. My return to Florence riveted them for ever. This fourth and last passion, fortunately for me, showed itself by symptoms entirely different from the three first. In the former my intellect had felt little of the fires of passion, but now my heart and my genius were both equally kindled, and if my passion was less impetuous, it became more profound and lasting. Such was the flame which by degrees absorbed every affection and thought of my being, and it will never fade away except with my life. Two months satisfied me I had now found the *true woman*, for instead of encountering in her, as in all common women, an obstacle to literary glory, a hindrance to useful occupations, and a damper to thought, she proved a high stimulus, a pure solace, and an alluring example to every beautiful work. Prizing a treasure so rare, I gave myself away to her irrevocably. And I certainly erred not. More than twelve years have passed, and while I am writing this chit-chat, having reached that calm season when passion loses its blandishments, I cherish her dearer than ever, and I love her just in proportion as slow by her in the lapse of time those little esteemed toll-



gatherers of departing beauty. In her my soul is exalted, softened, and made better day by day, and I will dare to say and believe she has found in me support and consolation.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### ENTIRE DONATION OF MY FORTUNE TO MY SISTER—SECOND AVARICE.

I now began to work cheerfully, with a mind calm and secure, like one who has at last found scope for action, and support for the feelings. I was already firmly resolved never to leave Florence while the object of my affections remained there. This gave me an opportunity of executing a design I had for a long time cherished, and which had now become necessary to my existence.

(1778.) The chains of the servitude in which I was born had always been intolerable. With no enviable peculiarity, our hereditary nobles exclusively are compelled to obtain the King's permission to leave his states, even for the shortest period. This permission, which is often obtained with difficulty or impertinence, is always limited. Four or five times I had been obliged to sue for it, and although I had never been denied, I considered it unjust, for neither cadets nor citizens of any class are subjected to such restraint, unless they are in the King's service. I had always submitted to it with increasing reluctance, but I could bear it no longer. The last time, as I have before hinted, it had been granted with an irritating word I found it hard to swallow. Besides, my writings were now increasing. Virginia I had extended with all the freedom the subject demands. I had written my *Tyranny* as though I had been born and was living in a country of just and rational liberty. I had read, and relished, and felt vividly Tacitus and Machiavelli, and other sublime authors like them. I had reflected and understood perfectly my position, and the impossibility of remaining in Turin while I was publishing my

writings, or of printing while I lived there. I was fully conscious how many misfortunes and dangers I should be exposed to printing abroad, while I remained subject to a law I will cite below. I will add to all these cogent reasons the new passion, that so fortunately for me had inflamed my heart. In view of all this I did not hesitate an instant in my firm purpose to UNPIEDMONTESE myself as much as possible, and at all hazards abandon the nest, from which I had unfortunately sprung.

More than one way of accomplishing this occurred to me. I could still go on year after year begging for an extension of my licence, and it would have been, perhaps, the most discreet measure—but even this was uncertain, and I could never entirely trust myself there while I depended on the will of others. I might resort to deceptions, subterfuges, and evasion, dissembling of debts, clandestine sales, and other expedients of escaping from my noble prison. But these means were all base and uncertain, and they were too harassing to suit my disposition. But I always liked to make an issue at once, and I firmly resolved to take the affair into my own hands and decide it for myself, rather than meet it some future day—to renounce all for art and glory, and the life of a true and independent author. It would be enough if I could save a portion of my property to live and print out of the country—all else I would give up. I was young and often rash, but I conducted matters with discretion. If I had delayed the crisis, and begun to print even the most harmless writings out of the country, the whole matter would have become very problematical, and my subsistence, my glory, my liberty, have remained entirely at the arbitration of an absolute despot, who, enraged with my thinking, writing and working generous and free, would certainly never have allowed me to break away from his control.

A law existed at that time in Piedmont, which declared, “It is moreover prohibited to every one to cause to be printed books, or other writings, out of Our States, without the licence of the Censors, under the penalty of 300 francs, or more, and corporal punishments, if circumstances exist to demand that a public example be made !” To this law was joined another:

“The Vassals inhabiting Our States cannot absent themselves from the same without Our permission in writing.”

Between these two fetters, it will be easily perceived I could not be at the same time Vassal and Author. I chose the latter, and hating every subterfuge and delay, I took the shortest way of bursting my chains, by making an entire donation of all my real estate, enfeofed and free, to my sister Julia, married to the Count di Cumiana. I performed this act in the most solemn and irrevocable manner, reserving to myself an annuity of fourteen thousand francs, which amounted to a little more than half my income. I was more than willing to lose the other half, and to buy independence of opinion—the choice of my home, and the freedom of my pen. But it caused me infinite annoyance and delay to bring the affair to a final conclusion; forms of law—the transaction of the business by letters consumed a great deal of time. It was, moreover, necessary to obtain the permission of the king: for in the most private affair in that blessed country the king is eternally meddling. My brother-in-law was obliged to transact the business for me and for himself, obtaining from the king license to accept my donation, and become authorized to accord to me the annuity wherever I should please to dwell. It was as plain as daylight to everybody, that the reason of this step was my determination to expatriate myself. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary the government should consent: for the king could at any time have interposed his despotism and cut off my bread. But to my great joy the king, who most certainly knew what I was about, was a good deal more anxious to get rid of me than to keep me, and he gave his consent to my self-spoliation, and we both were supremely satisfied: he to lose me, and I to find myself once more.

I will here add a strange circumstance, both to console my enemies and excite a smile at my own expense, on the face of every man who after self-examination shall discover he is less of a baby than myself. It will serve to show the careful observer, that sometimes the feebleness of the dwarf is united with the strength of the giant. It so happened that at the very time I was writing “*Virginia*” and the “*Tyranny*,” while I was

so robustly shaking off my chains, I continued still to wear the uniform of the King of Sardinia out of the country, and four years after I had left his service. And what will the *Savans* say when I confess the reason? I was persuaded my person appeared to better advantage in that dress! Laugh! O reader, and you have good reason for it, and add to your laugh too, that like a child I cared more about appearing well in the eyes of others than estimable to myself.

This affair dragged itself along from January to November (1778); for I afterwards completed another arrangement, by which I gave up all annuities, and received at once one hundred thousand francs. This was attended with even more difficulty than the first. But at last the king consented I should receive that sum sent to me, and I placed it in one of the life insurances of France. Not that I confided much more in that *most Christian*, than in the *Sardinian* king: but I thought by dividing my property I should be more sure of a subsistence. This donation was a decisive and important epoch for me. I have always blessed the thought and the result. I made no communication of it to my lady until the act was done. I would not expose her delicate mind to the test of finding fault with the measure, as opposed to my interests, or to approve it as desirable in securing durability to our love, by rendering a separation unnecessary. When she knew it she chided me with that ingenuous candor all her own. But it was too late to impede it, and she acquiesced with me, pardoning me for having kept silent, and perhaps loved me the more, and did not esteem me the less.

I was now busied in writing and re-writing letters to Turin, to conclude these vexations, royal, legal and parental delays. Resolute at all hazards not to retreat, I wrote to Elia, whom I left in Turin to dispose of all my furniture and plate. In two months, by indefatigable working, he got together over six thousand sequins, which I ordered him to transfer to me immediately in a bill of exchange on Florence. In consequence of some accident, more than three weeks passed after this, before I received an answer from him, or any notice from the banker. I am not naturally suspicious, but I could not sup-



press some misgiving in these trying circumstances, or account of so strange a delay on the part of so careful and exact a man as Elia. My fancy always on fire, converted this loss from a possibility into a reality. For more than fifteen days, I firmly believed my six thousand sequins had vanished into air, with my good opinion of my Elia. The affair with my sister was not yet concluded; every day I received new cavils from my brother-in-law, all in the name of the king. I finally answered him with anger and contempt, that if he did not wish my estate as a gift, he might take in his own way, for I never would return; and I held him and his money, and his king, in contempt; and, if they kept all, it would end the business. I was determined to expatriate myself for ever, even at the risk of begging. Secure of nothing now, squalid poverty stared me in the face. At last Elia's bills of exchange arrived. In those deliriums of fancy, the art I had fixed on to keep myself alive, was *training horses*, in which I esteem myself master. It is certainly one of the least servile; and it even seemed to me more *practicable* than that of poet, it being decidedly more easy to write tragedies in a stable, than in a court.

Before I was reduced to these straits, more imaginary than real, I had dismissed all my servants except one, and a cook, and these I dispensed with soon after. I had always been rather abstemious in my diet; but now I practised a salutary and uncommon system of sobriety. I abandoned wine, coffee, &c., restricting myself to rice, and a boiled or roasted dish, without varying it for years. Four of my horses I sent back to Turin, to be sold with the rest. Four others I gave away to Florentine gentlemen, who, although simply acquaintances, accepted them. My wardrobe, with my uniform, I gave to my servant. I now adopted a black dress for the evening, and a blue for the morning, colors I have never left off, and shall wear as long as I live. I gradually restricted myself down to bare necessities of life, and became at the same time both a miser and a giver of everything. I thus prepared myself for the worst. Regarding my six thousand sequins as my entire estate, I invested them in the French funds. Always inclined to excesses, my economy and independence proceeded by degrees to such ex-



tremities, that every day I invented some new privation, till I became almost sordid—I say *nearly*, since I still changed my linen every day, and did not neglect my person—but if I were writing of my stomach, every saving clause would be removed; for, in this respect, I had reached perfection. This was the second fit I ever had of a disease so base and degrading to the soul, and I think it will be the last.

But extreme as my avarice had become in all other respects, I was still spending a large sum for books. I collected nearly all the valuable works of our language, and the choicest editions of the Latin classics. I read them all one after the other, repeatedly, but too fast, and with too much avidity to reap their full fruit. But from my boyhood, I hated commentaries, and had rather guess out a difficulty than hunt for its solution in a note, or clear it up by reflection.

In the meantime, my compositions, during the year 1778, were seriously interrupted by the disturbances into which I was thrown, and a new obstacle had arisen to my advancement in the Tuscan tongue. My lady knew little of Italian, and I was obliged to converse with her in French, and hear it spoken in her house. But I sought an antidote to my Gallicisms in our excellent but tedious prose-writers of the 13th Century. By degrees, however, my lady learned Italian, till she spoke it more perfectly than I ever heard it spoken by a foreigner, and with a better pronunciation than the women of Italy out of Tuscany; for they pain the ear of any one accustomed to the delicious elastic Tuscan accent. But her house was always crowded with foreigners from beyond the Alps, and my poor Tuscan went through a continual martyrdom, for three years, in Florence. Nearly all my life, it has been my lot to be followed by this Gallic barbarism, and if I am ever able to write with purity and Tuscan flavor, I shall merit double praises for the obstacles I have encountered; and, if I fail, they will plead my extenuation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ENTHUSIASTIC STUDIES AT FLORENCE.

IN April, 1778, after versifying Virginia, and nearly all Agamemnon, I was seized with a short but violent illness, attended with the quinsy, which forced the physician to resort to bleeding, which left me a slow recovery, and an enfeebled constitution. It was brought on by agitation, disturbances, study, and love; and, although with the close of that year, all domestic disturbances passed away; yet, study and love, which knew no respite, deprived me of that stupid robustness, I had been acquiring during ten years of dissipation and travelling. But when summer came on, I recovered and worked intensely. This is my favorite season, and the more extreme the heat the more vigorously I study.

In May I had begun a little poem in octavo on the assassination of Duke Alexander by Lorenzino de' Medici. I liked the subject, but finding it ill adapted to tragedy, I moulded it into a poem. This I did by piece-meal, and at random, for the exercise of rhyming from which I had been diverted so long, by blank verse. I scribbled also some love ditties in praise of my lady, to mitigate the anguish in which her domestic trials had compelled me to pass so many hours. These rhymes begin with that sonnet:

“Negri, vivaci, in dolce fuoco ardenti,”

and all that follow were for her and her only—for of another woman I shall never sing again. They were written pretty well, and through them shines the intense affection which forced me to write.

(1778.) In July I extended with a raging fever of liberty the Tragedy of the *Pazzi*, and immediately after *Don Garzia*. I then divided and distributed into chapters, the three books of *The Principe* and *Le Lettere*, and extended the first three chapters. But not feeling myself master of language that could give the

force of my reflections, I deferred it, in order not to be obliged afterwards to reconstruct it entirely. In August at the suggestion, and for the satisfaction of my beloved countess, I idiatised *Maria Stuarda*. From September on, I versified *Orestes*, which ended this laborious year.

(1779.) My days now passed away in an almost perfect calm, which would have been unbroken, but for the distresses brought upon the Countess by her cruel and eternally drunken, dotard husband. Her sorrows were mine, and in them I felt the pains of death. I could only see her in the evening, and occasionally at dinner, but the husband was always present or in the adjoining room. He was no more jealous of me than others who frequented his house, but such was his system, and for more than nine years he *never, never*, went out of the house without her, nor she without him—a life of monotony that would have at last become irksome between congenial lovers. So I stayed at home all day with my books after a ride of two hours in the morning for my health. I found refuge in her presence for the evening, but my life was embittered by her afflictions. Had I not been intensely occupied with study, I never could have endured to see her so little and in the manner I did. But even this sole solace formed an antidote to the bitterness of my solitude, or I could never have endured such mad application to study.

During 1779, I versified “*La Conguira de’ Pazzi* ;” idiatised “*La Rosmunda*,” “*La Ottavia*,” and “*Il Timoleone* ;” extended “*La Rosmunda*” and “*Maria Stuarda* ;” versified “*Il Don Garzia* ;” finished the first Canto of the poem, and began the second.

I was solaced in these earnest labors by having the Countess near me, and in pouring out my soul to two absent friends in my letters, Gori of Siena, who had two or three times been to Florence to see me, and the excellent Abbé di Caluso, who had come to Florence in ’79, partly to enjoy for a year the blessed Tuscan tongue, and partly to be with one who longed for his presence. He wished also to devote himself to his studies more quietly and liberally than he could in Turin where brothers, nephews, cousins, and thoughtless persons of every sort enslaved his benignant and condescending spirit. He remain-

ed nearly a year in Florence. We saw each other every day, and passed several hours after dinner together. From his charming and enlightened conversation I learned imperceptibly far more than I should have done sweating over many books for many years. I shall feel eternal gratitude to him that among many other things he taught me to enjoy, to feel and discern the beautiful and endless variety of Virgil, whom till then I had only understood, which in a poem of that character is of no service at all. I tried afterwards (I know not with how much success) to transfuse into my blank verse dialogue something of that endless variety of harmony, that concision of style and striking transposition which so widely distinguish Virgil from Lucan, from Ovid, and from all—differences not easily expressed by words, and difficult to be understood by those who are not familiar with the art of poetry. I was obliged to gather aid from all quarters in amassing a treasure of forms and modes to impart to the mechanism of my tragic verse a character peculiar to itself, and establish it independently by the force of its structure, for in this style of composition the verse cannot be aided by the inflation of long periods, or superfluous transpositions, or pomp, or novelty of words, or foreign epithets; but the pure, simple, and dignified arrangement of words, breathes into Tragedy the essence of verse without the slightest sacrifice of the naturalness of dialogue. But all this, which, perhaps, I here badly express,\* and which had often before been deeply impressed on my mind I did not acquire to any great degree, if, indeed, I acquired it at all, till I reprinted long afterwards my tragedies in Paris. He who can read, study, relish, discern, and dive into the beauties and style of Dante and Petrarch, will, perhaps, accord me the capacity of writing with some taste; for whatever excellence I acquired in my art, I will not acknowledge

---

\* It is certain Alfieri has here expressed himself blindly, and was conscious of it himself. Indeed the book is filled with passages of doubtful interpretation, which the author would have certainly cleared up had he lived to give it the finishing stroke as he intended.

myself indebted to any but Virgil, Cesarotti and myself. But before I began to develope the power of creating in this style, I erred too long, groping my way, and falling very often into the elaborate and the obscure, through anxiety to avoid the feeble and the trivial.

(1780.) In the following year (1780), I versified Mary Stuart, extended Timoleon, which was the fruit of reading Plutarch whom I had even taken up again, and Octavia, which was the mere child of Tacitus whom I read and re-read with transport. I versified anew the whole of Philippe for the third time, always cutting it down, but it was for ever that same bastard it had been at its birth, filled with foreign forms and impurities. I also versified Rosamunda and a great part of *Octavia*; but towards the close of the year I was interrupted by the wild agitations which overwhelmed me.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCIDENT TAKES ME TO NAPLES AND TO ROME, WHERE I  
REMAINED.

THE woman I loved led a life of trouble. These domestic trials and the barbarities of her husband at last reached such a point, in the midst of a Bacchanalian scene, on St. Andrew's night, that she was constrained to find some way of escape from his tyranny, or die. I was now obliged once more to court the favor of men in power to obtain the emancipation of an innocent victim from so humiliating a yoke—that in such an affair I knew I could manage the interests of another better than my own. I had never given her extreme counsel but when her misfortunes themselves became extreme, as in this present instance, which admitted of no other issue. I did not then, nor will I ever, descend to a refutation of the stupid and malignant imputations cast on me in this affair. It is enough for me to say I saved the countess from the tyranny of a brutal



and drunken master, without sullyng her honor. And those who were familiar with her situation, dying as she was, inch by inch, will readily concede that, to extricate her from such a plot, was no easy task. At first she entered a convent at Florence. She was attended by the husband, under the aspect of an ordinary visit, but he was obliged, to his infinite surprise, to leave her there, by order of the government. Shortly after, she went to Rome, at the invitation of her brother-in-law, and retired to another convent. The reasons for this rupture with her husband were perfectly understood; the separation was universally approved.

She left for Rome at the close of December, and I remained in Florence, solitary and abandoned. I now felt, that without her, I was not half myself. Incapable of every kind of application, I no longer cared for the glory I had so ardently longed for. I had worked earnestly for her good, but for my misfortune, and I felt that a greater could not overwhelm me, than such a separation. I could not with propriety so soon follow her to Rome, nor could I bear to stay any longer in Florence. But I remained through January (1781), and the weeks seemed ages. I could no longer prosecute my occupations, and to escape from my gloom, I resolved to go on to Naples—a plan hit upon, as any one may see, of finally getting to Rome.

My second fit of avarice had left me a year before. I had invested in two sums 170,000 francs in the French stocks, which secured me an independence, and I had returned to a proper system of expenditure. I once more purchased four horses, which were enough for a poet. The dear Abbé di Caluso had returned to Turin six months before, and deprived of the solace of friendship, and the light of hope, my existence was annihilated. On the first of February I set out leisurely for Siena, where I embraced my friend, Gori, and then went on towards Rome. My heart swelled as I approached the city. So different are the eyes of a lover from those of everybody else, that desolate, insalubrious region, which appeared to me, three years before, just what it was, now seemed the most delicious spot in the world.

I arrived! I saw her! Oh God! my heart thrills while I

think yet of it ! I saw the prisoner behind a grate, but less distracted than I had even seen her in Florence, but not less unhappy. We were, to say the whole in one word, separated. and who could say how long this separation would last ? But I solaced myself in my tears, with the thought she was by degrees recovering her health, and breathing free air, and sleeping tranquil hours. Our separation, to which I was forced to submit, seemed now less horrible. During the few days I stayed in Rome I practised arts and intrigues for her emancipation, I would not have practised to gain the empire of the universe—I scorned to resort to them for myself, even when I presented myself on the vestibule of the temple of glory. I had many misgivings if I should be admitted, but I never offered incense to those who pretended to be its guardians. But now I paid court to her brother-in-law, on whom her entire liberty depended. I will, however, say little of these two brothers—they were well known. Oblivion will bury them as time goes by, and I will not rescue them ; I cannot praise them, and I will not defame them. In the meantime, humbling my pride to them, bespoke the depth of my affection to *her*. I departed for Naples, as I had promised, and was bound in delicacy to do. This second separation was harder to bear than the first at Florence : for those forty days had given me a foretaste of the gloom that awaited me now, when our parting was to be longer and more uncertain.

Beautiful Naples was not new to me, and my heart was too full of grief to receive pleasure. Books had lost their charm, Verses and Tragedies almost ceased to occupy me, and my existence was narrowed down to the letters I received and answered. I could think only of her I loved ; I spent much of my time riding alone on horseback, along the sweet shores of Pausilippo and Baia, or towards Capua and Caserta, generally weeping, and so crushed to the dust, I felt not the slightest inclination to pour out my feelings in Poetry. Thus I dragged out my existence, till the middle of May.

But there were some moments, when I gathered my strength, and accomplished something. I completed the versification of Octavia, and more than half Polinice, in a better style. The

year before I had written the second Canto of my Poem, and I began the third, but got no farther than the first stanza—the theme was too gay for my feelings. Thus almost my only occupation for four months, was writing letters and reading her's over a hundred times.

In the meantime her prospects were becoming more cheering. The latter part of March, she obtained permission from the Pope to leave the convent and remain tacitly divorced from her husband, in the city palace of her brother-in-law, who never resided in Town. I now desired to return to Rome, but I could not with propriety. But the struggles of an honest and a sensitive heart between love and duty, are the most terrible and mortal passions men can endure ; I wore April away, and had determined to chain myself to Naples till June, but the twelfth of May, I found myself again in Rome. Schooled by necessity, and inspired by love, I now gave myself up to a career of intrigues and diplomatic arts, to dwell in that city, and see sometimes the woman I adored. Thus after so many furies and fatigues, to make myself free, I was suddenly transformed into a visiting, reverential and weeping man in Rome, like a candidate for the prelacy. I did everything—I bowed myself to everything, and I remained in Rome, tolerated by those *Barbassori*, and even aided by the *hireling* priests, who felt, or feigned to feel an interest in the affairs of my Lady. But fortunately she was not dependent for her support, upon her brother-in-law or his worthy proxy, for she possessed an ample fortune.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

STUDIES RESUMED WITH ARDOR IN ROME—FOURTEEN TRAGEDIES  
COMPLETED.

Success at last crowned my efforts ; I was at liberty to visit the Countess every evening, and I once more plunged into my stu-

dies. I finished the versification of Polinice, and without taking breath, went over Antigone, Virginia, Agamemnon, Orestes, the Pazzi, Garzia and Timoleon (till then, never versified); and finally for the fourth time, I took up the obstinate Filippo. I sought occasional relaxation from excessive application to blank verse, in writing the third canto of my Poem. In December, I composed at one stroke, the four first odes on the Independence of America.\* I was inspired to write these odes, by reading the noble Odes of Filicaya, which encouraged me to undertake this inspiring subject. I extended the four in six days—the third in only one—and with some slight alterations they remained as they were originally written. Such is the difference at least with my pen, between scrubbing lyrical rhyme, and writing blank verse in dialogue.

(1782.) My tragedies were now so far advanced, I began to hope I could finish them during the year. From the beginning I determined to write only twelve; they were now all conceived, extended and versified, and for the most part reversified. I continued the reversification and filing down of the rest, in the order they were originally conceived.

One day in February, in turning over the Merope of Maffei, to study his style, I felt an involuntary burst of indignation to see our Italy wrapped in such miserable theatrical blindness as to believe that work not only the best tragedy that had been written in Italy (which was true), but the best that ever could be written. In a single flash I conceived the idea of another tragedy of the same name, more simple, bold, and spirited. I wrote under an impulse I could not resist. Whether I surpassed him, they will decide who come after me. If ever an author was justified in saying, "*Est Deus in nobis*," I was in idiating, extending, and versifying my Merope, for such was the excitement under which I wrote I found no peace till I

---

\* The glorious tocsin of our Revolution reached the ears of Alfieri, and he was, I think, the first poet in Europe, who sung our Independence. I am trying to do my share as an humble Proser—let one of our Poets—Halleck or Longfellow—at least, give us a translation of this glorious piece!



had driven the work through. I had invariably produced all my other tragedies at three efforts, and after long intervals. In the month of March I had given myself a good deal to the reading of the Bible, but not regularly and in order. But the reading of that book inspired me with a poetic enthusiasm. I was obliged to give vent to it in some biblical composition. So I idiated and extended, and soon after versified *Saul*, which I intended should be my last tragedy. Throughout the year, however, my fancy was so inflamed, I know not where it would have carried me, had I not been restrained by my resolution of writing no more. I should have produced two other biblical tragedies at least, so powerfully were they impressed on my fancy. But I had written too many rather than too few, and I stood firm to my resolution. In extending *Merope* and *Saul*, I felt such a dread of exceeding the number I had fixed, I promised myself I would not versify them till I had put the finishing stroke to all the rest, nor then unless when I came to extend them, I felt even a deeper enthusiasm than in idiating them. But of what avail are restraints, and promises, and proposals? I could not take up the rest till those were done. I will divide with these two tragedies any glory they may acquire, and leave them the chief part of the blame they encounter, for they seemed determined by main force to come into the world and join their companions. But none of my tragedies cost me so little labor or time.

By the close of September I congratulated myself on having put the finishing touch to my fourteen tragedies! Some months after I discovered into what a horrible delusion I had fallen. But at the time I really esteemed myself the first man in the world, having versified seven tragedies in ten months, and invented, extended, and versified two new ones,—in all, fourteen complete. In the month of October, after such violent labors, I passed a season of repose not less delicious than necessary, in a little trip on horseback to the Falls of Terni. Inflated with vain glory as I was, I still managed to conceal it from all the world but the woman I loved, who, under the illusion of affection, thought I had accomplished a glorious work, and inspired me on to fame. But after indulging for two



months the intoxicating dream of juvenile self-love, I examined my fourteen tragedies, and very soon discovered how wide a track I had still to pass before I reached the goal. But I was under thirty-four, had entered the literary lists with only eight years of study; and I hoped more ardently than ever one day to bear the palm. This hope shot its ray across my soul, but the world did not know it.

I had often read these tragedies in different circles of learned men and women of taste, with a fair proportion of fools; but they all had human passions. I sought in these readings advantage rather than praise. I was too well acquainted with men and the great world stupidly to swallow lip praises, seldom or never denied an author who asks nothing for his performances, and recites in a company of well educated and polite people. So I took those plaudits for just what they were worth. But I heeded and praised one kind of applause and disapproval, which could not deceive me. When twelve or fifteen people mingle together, the collective spirit resembles that of a public theatre. And although they pay nothing for admission, and civility requires them to maintain a more grave appearance, yet the ennui and the chill of the auditors can never be concealed, and much less can they be made to counterfeit a real attention, a warm interest, and a lively curiosity, for the result of the action. The listener can neither be made to command his countenance nor nail himself to his seat. The author in reading must be stupid indeed, not to read the feelings and the no feelings of his auditors. Such was my object, and if I am not mistaken, during an entire tragedy, for more than two thirds of the time I held the attention, and aroused a warm anxiety to see the end, which proves that even in the most familiar subjects of tragedy, the result is uncertain to the last. But I will confess, too, that the long, dull passages here and there, the tediousness I often felt while reading them, gave me the sincerest reproof. Involuntary yawnings, and *hems*, and restless shufflings of seats, manifested the feelings of the auditors, and furnished me no uncertain intimation. Not a few superb criticisms have been suggested to me by these rehearsals, by scholars, by men of the

world, and particularly, in regard to the passions, by women. The Literati applauded the elocution and the rules of the art; men of the world, the plot, the manner of conducting it, and the characters; and finally, I got some hints from young, snoring, twisting boors; it all resulted in great advantage. Listening to all and remembering all, slighting nothing and depreciating no one (although some of them I esteemed little enough), I finally adopted the suggestions most serviceable to me and my art. I will add to all these confessions, I was not unconscious these readings, by a foreigner in promiscuous assemblies, were certain to expose me to ridicule. But I do not regret it, if it resulted in any benefit to me or the drama. If it was a useless exercise, the ridicule I brought on myself will go along excellently well with the recitations and printings of the same tragedies afterwards.

---

## CHAPTER X.

PERFORMANCE OF ANTIGONE IN ROME—PRINTING OF THE FIRST FOUR TRAGEDIES—PAINFUL SEPARATION—JOURNEY THROUGH LOMBARDY.

I WAS now left in a sort of semi-repose, congratulating myself on my tragic fame, but still undecided if I should print immediately, or indulge my dream a little longer. But an occasion presented itself of doing both, in having my tragedies recited by a select company of Dilettanti, who had for some time rehearsed in a private theatre, in the palace of the Spanish ambassador, the Duke Grimaldi. Hitherto, they had always recited indifferent translations of comedies and tragedies from the French. I had assisted at a representation of the Earl of Essex, by Corneille, in which the part of Elizabeth was poorly recited by the Duchess Tagarolo. But as this lady was very beautiful, had a dignified person, and understood perfectly what she said, I thought that with a little training, she would

succeed. And so, among other fancies, the idea came into my head of trying one of *my* superfluities. I wished to see how far the manner I had chosen—bare simplicity of action, few characters, and verse so broken as to render a monotonous tone impossible, would succeed on the stage. With this view I selected *Antigone* as one of the least spirited of my works, imagining, if it turned out well, the probability would be stronger in favor of the rest, filled with deeper and more various passions. The proposal was accepted with pleasure, by the noble company; and as there was not one of them capable of representing in tragedy, a principal part, except the Duke of Ceri, brother of the Duchess di Tagarolo, I was obliged myself to take the part of Creonte, the Duke personating Emone, and his wife Argia; while the heroine's part was assigned with all propriety to the majestic Duchess di Tagarolo. Thus it was represented. I will add nothing more, as I have had occasion to speak of these representations too often already, in my other writings.

(1783.) Not a little inflated by the happy success of the rehearsal, I was induced, in the beginning of the following year, to try the terrible ordeal of the press. *How* hazardous this step was, which I had feared in the beginning, I learned by experience, which made me familiar with literary enmities and plots, envious booksellers, journal criticisms, and gazette caricatures; and, in fine, all the vile train that eternally follows the man who moves the types of a printer. Till then, all these things were so entirely unknown to me, I even knew not the machinery by which literary journals are kept going, so unsophisticated and really pure of conscience was I, in the writing art. I should have been subjected to a severe Censorship in Rome; and I wrote to my friend in Siena, to take the load upon his shoulders. He complied with my request, and offered, with the aid of several other friends, to superintend the publication himself, and urge it forward with the greatest vigor. I did not wish, at first, to venture more than four tragedies, and I sent the manuscript, executed with mechanical beauty; but in neatness, clearness, and elegance of style, it turned out too defective. In consigning it to the printer, I innocently sup-

posed all my labors, as an author, were over. I afterwards learned, to my sorrow, they were scarcely begun.

During the two months these four tragedies were going through the press, I remained at Rome, in a mental fever, and had I not been deterred by shame, I would have recalled my manuscript. At last they came, most *accurately* printed, thanks to my friend—most *filthily* printed, thanks to the printer, and barbarously versified (as I afterwards knew),—thanks to the author. Then came the *puerility* of going round to various houses in Rome, making presents, to buy votes with these well-bound first labors. This occupied me a good many days, and made me feel like a fool, as I undoubtedly seemed to others. I presented a copy to Pope Pius VI., to whom I had been presented the year before, and to my infinite confusion, I will confess with what filthiness I contaminated myself during that most blessed audience. I had very little esteem for the Pope, *as Pope*, and none at all for *Braschi*, as a man of letters, or patron of them, for he was not. But I made a most obsequious presentation of my beautiful volume, which he courteously accepted, opened, and laid on his little table, with many encomiums. He did not allow me to kiss his foot, but raising me up from my knees, His Holiness was pleased to pat my cheeks in a caressing manner, and I, myself, the very fellow who had then on my person the Sonnet on Rome, answered with blandness and courtesy to the praises of the Pontiff, for the composition and rehearsal of the *Antigone*, of which he had heard, he said, *wonders*. Seizing the moment in which he asked if I should write other tragedies, bestowing high encomiums upon art so ingenious and noble, I replied that I had already written several others, among others, *Saul*, which, being a sacred subject, I would inscribe to his Holiness, if he would condescend to accept the dedication. The Pope excused himself, telling me he could not accept the dedication of any theatrical piece whatever, to which I made no reply. But I experienced two very certain and well merited mortifications: one in the refusal of the dedication I had presumed on, the other, of appearing to be forced to esteem myself infinitely inferior to the Pope, since I had the vileness, weakness, or duplicity (for I was guilty of



one or all, or I should have done no such thing), of desiring obsequiously to offer one of my works, as a tribute of my esteem, for an individual I esteemed infinitely my inferior in real merit. But I ought candidly to expose the real motive that led me thus to prostitute the buskin to the Tiara. For some time the brother-in-law of the Countess had been instigating the priests to propagate vile scandals about my frequent visits at her house, and the popular excitement was every day increasing. So I endeavored, by this adulation of the sovereign of Rome, to create in him a prop against the persecutions I apprehended, and which, in fact, about a month after, were unchained against me. I doubt not the rehearsal of *Antigone*, by bringing me more into public notice, had excited and multiplied my enemies. Love had thus taught me duplicity and vileness. Let any one deride me who can, but let him remember himself! I could have left this matter in lasting oblivion, but I bring it to light for my own and the good of others. I never spoke of it to any one but the Countess, and I have been often ashamed of it. I have recorded it, also, in part, for the consolation of contemporary and future authors, who, through some unpropitious circumstance, may be forced to dishonor their works and themselves, by humiliating dedications. Besides I wished to give my enemies an opportunity to say, with truth and relish, that if I did not debase myself by such duplicities, it was simply owing to my fortune, which made me independent.

(1783.) In April the Countess' husband was taken dangerously ill, at Florence. His brother set out in haste to see him before he died; but his malady suddenly subsided, and he found him out of danger. During the fifteen days he was recovering, he kept his brother with him; and the priests who had accompanied him from Rome, and those who had attended the patient in Florence, were plotting to get the husband to persuade his brother he ought not to tolerate the conduct of his sister-in-law in his house in Rome. I certainly will not make any apology for the life usually led in Rome, and throughout Italy, by married women; but I will say that the conduct of the Countess was more guarded than custom universally tole-



rated in that city. I will add, too, that the ferocious and malignant character of her husband were matters universally known. But I will, however, acknowledge that the husband and the brother and the priests had every reason for not approving of my too frequent visits, *although they were strictly confined within the limits of unsullied honor!* I was only displeased that the zeal of the priests (the sole wire-pullers of the scenes) was actuated by irreligious and selfish motives; for not a few of them cut a figure that pronounced an eulogium upon my conduct, and a satire upon their own—their motives were revenge and intrigue. The brother was the tool of the priests, and on his return to Rome he intimated to the Countess, by means of the priests, that he had arranged with his brother to break up our intercourse entirely—he would endure it no longer; and this impetuous and obstinate personage, to effect this object in the most decorous manner, caused a scandalous report to be circulated through the entire city, talking about it himself, and spreading his tattle about, from the midwives up to the Pope. Then went afloat the rumor that the Pope had ordered me to quit Rome—which was not true, but easily could have been made so—thanks to Italian liberty! However, recalling the days of my wig in the academy, when I anticipated my enemies by unwigging myself, I now also forestalled the insult of being compelled to leave, by going of my own accord. At the same time, our Sardinian minister counselled me to confide the whole affair to the secretary of state, and feeling deeply sensitive for the honor and the peace of such a woman, I determined to abandon Rome the following May, till the scandal had passed. This voluntary, but painful resolution, pleased the minister, was approved by the secretary, the Pope, and all who knew the truth. I now prepared myself for this most cruel parting. I took this measure, conscious of the sad and horrible life I should be compelled to abandon myself to if I remained in Rome, where I could not have continued my visits (however cleverly managed) without exposing her to infinite displeasures and mortifications; nor could I visit her in other places without useless and indecorous mystery and deception. For both of us ~~to~~ remain in Rome without seeing each other, would have been

a living torture ; to lessen the evil, we both chose separation, waiting for better times.

(1793.) On the 4th of May, a day that always has and always will be a day of gloom in my memory, I separated from the one who was dearer to me than my own life. Of all our separations this was the most terrible, for the hope of seeing her again was too distant and uncertain to afford any consolation. For two years I was covered with a gloom, which suddenly arrested my literary course. I had in Rome led a delightful life ; in my delicious retreat at the Strozzi Villa, near the baths of Dioclesian, I passed my mornings entirely in study, going out only an hour or two for a ride on horseback, through those desolate solitudes in the neighborhood of Rome, which invite to reflection, tears and poetry. My evenings I passed with the Countess, in whose sweet society I forgot the fatigues of study, and returned happy to my quiet home, always retiring before eleven o'clock. A home more joyous, free and rural, one more congenial to my tastes and pursuits, could never be found in the neighborhood of a great city, and I shall remember it and long for it, till I die.

Torn from the Countess, my books, the villa, peace, and even myself, I went away on the road to Siena, like a petrified and insensible man. Here I could at least weep with greater freedom, a few days with my friend. I could not now tell where I should go, where I should stay, or what I should do. But I felt an indescribable relief conversing with that incomparable man, who blends so much that is kind and compassionate, with so much loftiness and vigor of judgment. One can never know how much a friend is worth till the day of sorrow comes ; I believe that without him I should have gone mad ; but he seemed to see in me a hero, who knew too well the names and the substance of fortitude and virtue, but yet one hopelessly overthrown. He felt however no satisfaction in cruelly opposing to my delirious feeling, his severe and cold reasoning, but he knew the secret of assuaging my grief, by sharing it with me. Oh ! how rare and celestial a gift does he possess, who knows how to reason and feel at the same time !

But this separation had crushed and blighted all my intellect-

ual powers. I had no occupation but writing letters, and I wrote literally volumes—but I cannot tell what I wrote. In them I poured out all the indomitable passions of a boiling heart, and of a mind fatally wounded. Every idea of Literature was so entirely driven from my mind, that letters I had received in Rome, from Tuscany, attacking most virulently my printed tragedies, made no more impression on my feelings, than if they had been the tragedies of another man. Some of them were racy and civil, but generally insulting and base; some were anonymous—but they all condemned exclusively my style, calling it *hard*, *obscure* and *extravagant*; none of them however seemed to be able to descend to particulars. To divert me from my gloom, Gori read to me in the newspapers of Florence and Pisa *yclept* Journals, the very same criticisms contained in these letters. They were the first Literary Journals, so called, that had ever come to my eyes or ears, and now for the first time I penetrated the recesses of that very respectable art, which praises and blames books, with discernment, justice and learning, according as the Journalist may have been before-hand regaled, flattered, deceived or bribed, by the respective authors. But I cared little about these venal censures, for my mind was filled with other reflections.

After three weeks passed at Siena, shut out from the society of all but my friend, I felt I could no longer sadden him with my sorrows. Unable to devote myself to any occupation, I was again seized with my usual impatience of place, and I resolved once more to begin my travels. The *festa* of the Ascension in Venice was approaching, and I set out for that city. I passed through Florence without stopping, for I could not endure the scenes where I had once been so happy. The exercise of riding on horseback, and the fatigues of the journey, reinvigorated my health, which had begun for some months to feel the shock. At Bologna I left my route, to visit in Ravenna the sepulchre of the Poet, where I passed an entire day, fancying, praying and weeping.

During this journey to Venice, I struck a new vein of passionate rhyme, and every day I made one or more sonnets, which flowed spontaneously, and with enthusiasm, from my

excited fancy. The news had arrived at Venice, that peace had been signed between England and America, recognizing her entire Independence. I wrote the fifth Ode of *America Libera*, which brought that little lyric to a close. From Venice I went on to Padua, without neglecting, as I had twice before done, to visit the house and the tomb of Petrarch. Here, too, I consecrated an entire day to tears and rhymes, unburdening my overflowing heart. At Padua I became acquainted with the celebrated Cesarotti, with whose vivacious and courteous manners I was no less charmed than I have always been in reading his masterly verses in Ossian.

I returned to Bologna through Ferrara, where I finished my fourth poetical pilgrimage, by visiting the tomb and manuscripts of *Ariosto*. I had often been at the grave of *Tasso*, in Rome, and seen his cradle in Sorrento. These four poets were then, and always will be, my *only* guides in this most beautiful tongue; and I find in them all that poetry can give, except blank verse in dialogue, whose elements should be taken from the four, blended in a new way. These illustrious men, after reading them sixteen years, always seem new—always better in their good things; and I will even say, useful in their worst; for, although I will not with blind enthusiasm declare them absolutely perfect, I will say, that one who can fathom their motives and intentions—understanding them perfectly, and relish them too, can, even from their defects, derive infinite advantage. From Bologna I went on in my gloom to Milan, where I was so near my dear Abbé di Caluso, who was with his nephews in their beautiful castle of Masino, near Vercelli, that I passed five or six days with him. Turin, too, was so near, I felt ashamed not to devote a day or two, to go and embrace my sister. I went for one night only with my friend, and the next evening we returned to Masino. It was understood I had abandoned my country, with my estate, and I did not like to be seen there so soon, particularly by the Court. This was the reason of that flying visit, which, to many, might appear ridiculous, when the motive was unknown. Six years had passed since I lived in Turin, and I did not feel there



secure, or quiet, or free. I wished not, I ought not, and I could not remain there long.

From Masino, I immediately returned to Milan, where I stayed till the latter part of July. Here I saw very frequently the original author of *Mattino*, the true precursor of Italian satire. I endeavored, with the sincerest docility, to learn from this elegant writer, the principal defects of my dramatic style. With amiability and goodness, he hinted to me some things not very important; for, altogether, they could never constitute *style*, only some of its ingredients. But the defects of my style, which I could not then discover alone, I never learned from Parini, or Cesarotti, or any of the scholars I visited with fervor and humility in this journey through Lombardy. I was obliged, for many years after, to search with labor and uncertainty, where these defects lay, and try to correct them by myself. But my tragedies were better received on this side the Appenines than in Tuscany; and my style has been criticised with greater severity and intelligence. This had also been the case in Naples and Rome, with the few who read them. It seems, then, to be an ancient privilege of the Tuscans, thus to encourage Italian writers, although they may belong to the class who write something better than trash.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

SIX OTHER TRAGEDIES PUBLISHED—CRITICISMS ON THE FIRST  
PRINTED—REPLY TO COLSABIGI'S LETTER.

IN the early part of August, I left Milan for Tuscany, by the new picturesque route of Modena and Pistoja. During this ride, I tried, for the first time, to give vent in epigrams to my excited poetical gall. I was persuaded that if we had no satirical, pointed, biting epigrams in Italian, it was not the fault of our tongue; for it has as good teeth, claws, arrows, pungent brevity, as any other ever had or ever will have. The



Florentine Pedants afforded me a rich subject. I saw some of this gentry during the few days I passed at Florence, and assumed the mask of the lamb, to win from them either light or laughter. The first acquisition was impossible, but I had the second to my fill. These *barbassori* very modestly gave me to understand that, "If, before publication, I had subjected my manuscripts to their criticism, I should have written well,"—and other kindred impertinences. I candidly asked, if in regard to purity and analogy of words, and the most holy grammar, I had really solecised, barbarized, or blundered. But on such matters they could give me no light. These blemishes might have existed, but they were too ignorant of their art to point them out—there may have been grammatical blunders, but they were not acquainted with them. They imputed to me what they called antiquated words—obsolete phrases, too short, obscure and harsh for the ear. Thus, enriched and illuminated in the tragic art, by such luminous masters, I returned to Siena. I now felt the need of vigorous occupation, to divert my mind from its gloom, and I took the publication of my tragedies into my own hands. In laying before my friend the advices and lights I had been gathering from our different Italian oracles—especially the Florentines and Pisans—we regaled ourselves with an amusing comedy, before preparing to make those critics laugh once more over our last tragedies. I set about the work of printing with vigor and precipitation, and in less than two months, six new tragedies came forth to the light, in two volumes, which, with the first four, completed the edition. And now I was forced to learn other new things by sad experience. A few months before I had formed an acquaintance with journals and journalists, I was now brought in contact with Censors of manuscripts, revisers of proofs, compositors, pressmen, and foremen. These three last are tractable and docile, when well paid; but the revisers and censors, spiritual and temporal, must be visited, prayed, flattered; and endured, too, which is no small load. In my first publication, Gori had shouldered all these burdens, and would have done the same now. But wishing, for once at least, to catch a glimpse of all the world, I improved this chance of seeing a censor's

eyebrow, the gravity and petulance of a reviser—I saw it all, and not a few jokes would have come out of it, had not my heart been too sad for mirth.

For the first time I took the proofs into my own hands, but my mind was so oppressed I did not correct them as I might have done, nor as I did many years after, when I reprinted them in Paris. Printers' proofs are invaluable in reading detached portions; the eye more sharply detects mistakes, obscurities, verses badly turned, and all those little imperfections which, when multiplied, spoil a work. But, on the whole, these six new tragedies turned out even on the confession of the malignaut, much better executed than the first. I thought it best not to add the other four, particularly the Conspiracy of the Pazzi and Mary Stuart, since they would only have increased my embarrassment, and that of her whom I loved better than myself.

I was now seized with a severe attack of the gout, brought on by reading proofs immediately after dinner, and from having been subject to such violent precipitations. For fifteen days I suffered the keenest torture, but would not lie in bed. I had suffered a slight attack in Rome, more than a year before. I now saw I should be occasionally visited by this pastime during the rest of my life. Trouble and study had brought it on, but my abstemiousness had bravely combatted it, and the assaults of my badly-fed gout have been neither frequent nor violent. When my tragedies were being issued, I received from Calsobigi of Naples a long letter, crowded to overflowing with quotations in all languages, on the subject of my first four tragedies. I sat down to reply to it immediately, for it seemed to me the only one that had yet issued from a sound, critical, just and illuminated mind. This gave me an occasion of unfolding my reasons of analyzing how and why I had erred, and of teaching the host of stupid critics to criticise with discernment or hold their tongues. I was filled with the subject, and the letter cost me little fatigue, and afterwards served as a Preface to my Tragedies; but I did not prefix it to the edition of Siena, which, only an experiment, I wished to come forth naked, and receive arrows of every sort from every side, flat-

tering myself perhaps I should live to survive it, as nothing invigorates an author more than a silly criticism. I should not have revealed my vanity, had I not determined, in the beginning of these scribblings, to withhold nothing in regard to myself, and never to assign any motives for my conduct except with the most ingenuous truth. I published the second volume the first of October, reserving the third to sustain a new war, when the second had subsided.

But as a re-union with the Countess, which I longed for more than all things, was absolutely impossible, a feeling of despair took possession of me, and I sought in vain for the peace I had once felt. I determined on making a long journey into France and England. I no longer felt prompted by any ungratified curiosity, for these feelings had already been gratified and extinguished; *but I wished to travel*, for I have never found any other remedy or solace for pain. This time I determined to bring back with me a drove of English horses! This rage for horses is still my third passion, and so unblushing and bold has it been in its usurpations, that beautiful chargers have many times had the audacity to chase the Muses from the field. So I flung aside the Poet, took up the whip and set off for London, with my fancy all on fire with beautiful heads, fine breasts, proud crests, flowing mane—thinking little about my published or unpublished tragedies. In such follies I consumed eight or nine good months, doing nothing, studying nothing, and reading nothing but passages from my four poets, one of which I always carried in my pocket—inseperable, dear companions for so many thousands of miles! I travelled on, thinking of my absent mistress, often writing to her with a sad heart

## CHAPTER XII.

### THIRD JOURNEY INTO ENGLAND ONLY TO BUY HORSES.

I LEFT Siena the middle of October, and went on through Pisa and Lerici to Genoa where my friend Gori accompanied me. Here after two or three days we separated—he returning to Tuscany, and I embarking for Antibo. We made a quick but dangerous sail of eighteen hours. It was a night of fear. The felucca was small, and my carriage destroyed its equilibrium. The wind and the sea were bold and terrible; but we landed in safety, and I went on without halting to Avignon, where with transport I visited the magical solitudes of Vaucluse; and Lorgue witnessed not a few of my tears. The day I passed in going and coming from Vaucluse, I composed four sonnets. It was one of the most beautiful, and one of the saddest days of my life. On leaving Avignon I visited the celebrated Chartreuse of Grenoble, where, in tears, I composed not a few rhymes.

This third sight of Paris left the same impression I always felt in that immense sewer—anger and pain. I stayed there three months, and they seemed an age. I carried numerous letters to the *litterati* of every description, but I had arranged matters for going to England in December. The French *litterati* have little to do with our Italian literature—they seldom go beyond Metastasio, and I cared little about having anything to do with them—there was no point of contact between us. Bent upon affecting stupidity whenever I was obliged to hear or speak that anti-Tuscan nasal gibberish, I hastened the moment of my departure. Balloons were the rage just then. I saw the first and most successful experiments; one with rarefied air, the other with inflammable gas, each carrying two persons. (1784.) Grand, admirable spectacle! a theme more worthy of poetry than truth, a discovery which will be sublime whenever there is a probability of its being of any use!

I arrived in London, and in a week began to buy horses. First a racer, two for the saddle, then another, and afterwards

six coach-horses. Several of my colts died, but every dead one I supplied with two live ones. This horse fever, which had now slept under its ashes six years, at last caught fire so wildly it made way against all obstacles. I had lost five horses in a short time, but kept on buying till I got up to fourteen, as I had in my tragedies. The tragedies emptied my head, the horses my purse. But the excitement of my cavalry invigorated my health and ardor for future compositions, so that these large sums were well spent, for they helped me recover my languishing fire; and I did well to launch out the money, for it was jingling uselessly in my pocket. After my donation I had passed three years in penury, and three more with economy, which left me a fine sum, the fruit of my French funds I had never touched. These fourteen friends consumed a great part of my savings in their purchase and sending to Italy; and their maintenance for five years disposed of the rest, for after once getting out of their Island, not one of them would die, and I loved them too well to sell them. Furnished with horses, overshadowed with the gloom of that dreadful separation, I shunned society. I was either with my horses, or writing her letters. During these four months in London I thought no more about tragedies than I should if I had never written any. Occasionally, indeed, the singular coincidence between the number of the tragedies and the beasts occurred to me, and laughingly I said to myself, "Thou art the man to gain a horse for every tragedy," being reminded by the horses of the sound of the whip the pedagogues administered to us when we produced a stupid composition.\* Thus I lived on in shameful sloth for months and months, scarcely opening my companion-poets, and drying up my poetical vein, for in London I wrote but one sonnet, and two as I left the Capital. In April, with my numerous caravan I landed at *Calais*, and journeyed on to

---

\* In the schools of Italy a custom prevails to some extent, of condemning the delinquent to the odium of mounting the shoulders of one of his comrades, who marches with him round the room, while the rest of the boys ply him with the lash. This is called getting a horse!



Siena, through Paris, Lyons, and Turin. But it is vastly easier to write about that trip than it was to make it with those beasts. I encountered every day and at every step perplexities and vexations, which embittered the pleasure I should otherwise have had from my cavalry. One was taken with a cough—another wouldn't eat—another was lame—another had swelled legs, and another had gravelled feet, and I can't say what else—it was a continual sea of troubles, and I was the one who had to bear it all. In crossing the channel from Dover, like a flock of sheep they were thrown into the hold for ballast, and so frightened and dirtied one could not distinguish their beautiful gold chestnut skins; their board covering was carried away. At *Calais*, before going ashore, the inhuman sailors made decks of their backs, to tramp over like a vile pavement, and then they were swung in the air with their legs tied, and dropped in the sea, for the tide prevented the vessel from coming up to the landing, and I would not leave them all night in that horrible condition. In passing through it all I suffered the pains of death. But yet such was the solicitude, foresight, and obstinate bantering I kept up, in spite of all these dangers and troubles I got them all safely ashore. I confess I cherished a not less foolish than extravagant vanity for what I had done, and in passing Amiens, Paris, Lyons, and Turin, where my horses were pronounced beautiful by connoisseurs, I cherished them as though I had made them myself. But my most arduous and heroic undertaking was the passage of the Alps from Lansleberg and Novalaise. I suffered a great deal in ordering their march, that no misfortune might happen to such large and heavy beasts in those narrow and difficult foot-paths. And as it was a perplexing matter for me to go through with the reality, let the reader pardon me for troubling him with the narrative. Whoever wishes can pass it over, and he who has a mind to read it will see how much better I can distribute the march of fourteen beasts through the Pass of Thermopylæ, than the Five Acts of a Tragedy.

My horses were young and spirited, which only made it the more difficult to conduct them over those rugged passes. I had taken at Lansleberg a man for every horse, and they led

them on foot by short bridles. Three horses were hitched together in a company, and between each company I posted a mounted muleteer. In the centre of the line was stationed the *farrier* of Lansleberg, with nails, tools, and spare shoes for the feet when the shoes came off, which was the greatest danger we had to fear. Last of all, as chief of the expedition I came myself, riding my smallest, surest-footed horse Frontino. On my side were two spry footmen, whom as aids for the march I despatched with my orders along the line. In this order we reached the top of Mount Cenis. As we began the descent into Italy I changed my post, and placed myself at the head, descending on foot inch by inch. To retard still more the restive animals in their descent, I posted the largest horses in front, and kept the adjutants moving up and down the lines to see that every horse was in his place. Three of the beasts lost their shoes, but we had arranged everything so well the farrier immediately remedied the difficulty, and we all reached Novalaise safe and sound, feet in excellent condition, and not one of them lame. These notes may be of some service to one obliged to take a caravan of horses over the Alps, or other difficult passes. As for myself, having so successfully directed the expedition, I thought I had performed almost as great a feat as Hannibal, who, a little farther south, scaled the same mountains with his slaves and elephants. If his expedition cost him a good deal of *vinegar*, mine cost me not a little *wine*, for the whole *posse* of guides, farrier, muleteers, and adjutants, were enormous guzzlers.

With a head crowded to overflowing with this horse expedition, and emptied of every noble thought, I reached Turin at the close of May, where I remained three weeks, after more than six years' desertion of my native country. After six or eight days of rest I sent my horses on to Tuscany, where I was to join them. The interval I wanted for a respite, after so many fatigues and fooleries which, in fact, had reflected little honor upon a tragic author, past his thirty-fifth year. But after all, the relaxation, the exercise, and the entire suspension of all study, had astonishingly invigorated my health, and I felt my strength and my youth renewed again, but to the sacri-

fice of my intellectual progress ; for my horses had come very near turning me into the same ass I had been many years before. My mind had gathered once more so much of its original rust, the idea of ever writing again seemed an impossibility.

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SHORT STAY IN TURIN—REHEARSAL OF VIRGINIA.

IN Turin I had pleasures and mortifications. It is one of the sweetest things in the world to revisit the friends of our early youth, the scenes of our first recollection, where every plant and every stone, where all things recall our earliest thoughts and feelings. But then I found not a few of the companions of my childhood who, on this visit, took pains to avoid me. On meeting me unawares, they gave me a cold salute, and turned their faces another way,—persons to whom I had never shown anything but friendship and cordiality. This was a bitter reception truly, but it would have cut me worse had I not been informed by the few excellent associates I had, that some treated me in that way because I had written tragedies, others because I had travelled too much, the rest because I had appeared in the country with too many horses, and all such little-nesses, pardonable, however, most pardonable by one who has learned to understand others from an impartial study of himself ; but still they are things to be avoided by exiling oneself from his country for ever, particularly where the country is small and the inhabitants indolent, and finally where things have come to such a pass, that only to attempt to excel them in anything whatever is a cause of mortal offence.

Another bitter but unavoidable dose I had to swallow in Turin !—A presentation to the king, who certainly had been offended with me for tacitly abjuring him by my final expatriation. But the customs of the country and my rank obliged me to appear at court, to escape the imputation of insolence and bad

manners. I had scarcely arrived at Turin before my good brother-in-law, first gentleman of the bed-chamber, came in haste to sound me, to see if I would be presented. I immediately quieted and consoled him by a positive assurance I would, and left him to arrange the matter. So I was presented a subsequent day by the minister. My brother-in-law had already assured me beforehand that at the time the Government contemplated me with favor, and I should be well received; and he added I could have a place in the Court. This unmerited and unexpected favor made me tremble! but the hint was of great service to me, for it put me on my guard to maintain a deportment and discourse that would not commit me. So I said to the minister that as I was passing through Turin, I thought it my duty to visit his Excellency, and seek, through him, an opportunity of offering my homage to the King. The minister gave me a bland reception, and I could almost say, *feasted me*. At first he cautiously hinted and afterwards openly told me that the king would be pleased if I would establish myself in the country—that he wished me well—that I could distinguish myself, and similar phrases. I cut the whole matter short, and without any duplicity replied that I should return to Tuscany, to prosecute my publications and my studies—that I had reached the age of thirty-five, when a man should no longer change his plans—that having embraced the profession of letters, I should, for good or evil, follow these pursuits for the rest of my life. He replied that letters were beautiful and useful, but there were occupations more grand and important, for which I was and ought to feel myself capable. I thanked him courteously, but persisted in my refusal. I had the moderation and the generosity not to inflict upon that noble and good man the mortification he had so well merited, by giving him to understand that his dispatches and diplomacies seemed to me, and moreover really were, infinitely less grand and dignified than my tragedies, or those of other authors. But this sort of people are *unconvertible*, and ought to be, and it is my nature never to hold arguments except occasionally with those I accord with in the main; to everybody



else I give up conquered on the start. So I contented myself by a simple refusal.

It is probable this was all made known to the king through the minister, for the following day, when I had my audience, the king said nothing to me about it, but treated me with an affability and courtesy peculiar to himself. This sovereign is Vittorio Amadeo II., son of Carlo Emanuele, under whose reign I was born. Although I have no love for kings as a race, and least of all for despots, yet I ingenuously confess that our race of princes is good, on the whole, especially in contrast with nearly all the rest of Europe. I feel an affection for them rather than aversion, especially for the present king and his predecessor, who have manifested good intentions, excellent, well bred, and exemplary characters, and have done more good than evil to their country. And yet, when one thinks and vividly feels that their good or evil depends entirely upon their own absolute will, he must discountenance the principle and turn his back on it. And so I did after the few days necessary for seeing friends and acquaintances. My time was delightfully and usefully passed with my incomparable friend, the Abbé Caluso, who set my head to rights again, and in some measure broke the lethargy into which I had been precipitated and nearly buried. While I was in Turin I assisted (without desiring it particularly) at a public rehearsal of my *Virginia*, in the same theatre where *Cleopatra* had been presented, nine years before, by actors of about the same ability. One of my old academy friends had already prepared this rehearsal before my arrival at Turin, and without knowing I was coming. He tried to prevail on me to interest myself in training the actors a little, as I had before done for *Cleopatra*. But having increased, perhaps, somewhat in capital and much more in pride, I would do no such thing, understanding very well our actors and our pits. I did not care about becoming in any sense an accomplice of their incapacity, which, without hearing a word, was as evident to me as a Q. E. D. could make it. I knew I should have encountered impossibilities in the outset, in teaching them to speak and pronounce Italian, and not Venetian—to have them, and not the prompter, recite the tra-



gedy, and to understand (it would have been too much to hope they should feel it too—but simply to understand) what they wished to make the audience feel. So that, after all, my refusal was not so unreasonable, nor my pride so indiscreet. I left my friend, then, to manage the affair himself in his own way, promising only to be present at the representation. And in fact, I was already well convinced that while I lived I had nothing to expect from the praise or blame of an Italian theatre. Virginia obtained for the time the same attention and the very same result Cleopatra had before it. It was called for the following evening and no more, and, as may readily be supposed, I did not go. But from that day I began to awake from my dream of glory, and since then its illusions have been gradually passing away. Still I will not give up my cherished resolution of trying still for ten or fifteen years, till I am sixty, two or three other new kinds of composition, with what success will yet be seen, so that when I grow old and when I come to die, I'll have the cheerful reflection to console me, of having done for poetry what I could. And as to the judgments of living men, I repeat it weeping, the state of the art of criticism in Italy leaves nothing to be hoped or gained in our times; for I will not esteem that to be praise which does not award that discriminating commendation which animates the author, neither will I call that criticism which does not show a better way.

I suffered death at this representation of Virginia. It was even more terrible than Cleopatra, but for very different reasons. Nor will I more particularly explain what they were, for any one who has taste and pride of art will understand them perfectly, and to one destitute of these qualities my reasons would be useless and incomprehensible.

I went down to Asti, where I passed three days with my dear and venerable mother. And then we parted with many tears, thinking it more than possible we should see each other no more. I will not say that I felt for her the affection I might and ought, for after my ninth year I had never seen her except on a flying visit for the hour. But my esteem, gratitude, and veneration for her and her virtue have always been supreme,

and will be till I die. Heaven grant her a long life, since she is a ministering angel to the poor and the distressed of the city. Her heart yearns for me, I well know, more than I desire and more than I can tell. Her deep grief at our parting cut me to the heart, and I remember it still.

I had no sooner stepped my feet over the frontier of the states of the king than I breathed freer again; so heavily did the rest of my native yoke weigh upon my neck, although I had broken it in pieces. For during my visits there every time I was obliged to meet the reigning *Barbassori* of the country. I stood in the light of a *slave made free* rather than a *freeman*—reminding me of that beautiful saying of Pompey, when he sought refuge in Egypt: “He who enters the house of the tyrant becomes a slave if he was not one before;” so he who, through mere idleness and caprice, enters once more his deserted prison, may easily find it shut when he would go out again, as long as the same jailors are left to guard it.

In journeying on to Modena, letters from the Countess filled me sometimes with pain and sometimes inspired me with hope, but I was still harassed with continual uncertainty. But at Piacenza her letters announced her final liberation from Rome which transported me with rapture, for Rome was the only place where I did not wish to meet her; but on the other hand decency with its strong appeals forbade me from following her. She had, with a thousand difficulties, and no small pecuniary sacrifices to her husband, finally obtained from the brother-in-law and the pope, permission to visit the waters of Baden, her health having become seriously affected by the scenes she had passed through. In June, 1784, she had set out from Rome by the long route of the shores of the Adriatic, through Bologna, Mantua, and Trent, and gone on towards Tyrol, while I had started from Turin through Piacenza, Modena, and Pistoja, to return to Siena. The thought of being so near her, and of afterwards being so far separated, was full of rapture and full of pain. I could easily have sent my carriage and servants directly to Tuscany, and taken the post-road on horseback, and very soon rejoined her, or at least seen her. I desired, I feared, I hoped, I resolved, I vacillated

vicissitudes of feeling well known to the few who know how to love. But duty and regard for her reputation finally conquered, and cursing and weeping, I firmly kept on my journey. Weighed thus heavily down by this painful victory, I arrived at Siena after ten months of travelling. I found in my friend Gori, my accustomed and necessary consolation, and went on dragging out my life and tiring out hope.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

JOURNEY TO ALSACE—MEETING WITH THE COUNTESS—THREE NEW TRAGEDIES IDIATED—SUDDEN DEATH OF MY FRIEND GORI AT SIENA.

My fourteen horses reached Siena a few days after the fifteenth which I had before left there in the care of my friend; it was my beautiful golden Fido, the one which had so often in Rome borne the Countess for a sweet burden, and for that sole reason had become dearer to me than all the rest. These horses distracted my attention from everything else, and this united with depression of heart to render abortive every attempt to resume my literary occupations. For a portion of June, and all through July I did not stir from Siena, and in the meantime I composed some rhymes, and the few stanzas necessary to complete the third Canto of my Poem; I also commenced the fourth and last. And although this piece was written in the midst of so many interruptions, at such long and broken intervals, and without any systematic plan, yet the subject had been deeply impressed upon my mind. I was particularly careful to guard against needless prolixity in the work, for if I had indulged in episodes and ornaments, I should have written with greater facility. But in the production of a work, original, racy, and of a terrible *bitter-sweet*, brevity is the great indispensable. For this reason I had at first idiated only three Cantos, but the Censors of the press had *stoled* nearly one

Canto, so I made four of it; but still I am not quite certain if so many interruptions may not have given to the poem some incoherence as a whole.

While I was writing the fourth Canto I was continually receiving and writing letters. They inspired me with the hope of soon seeing the Countess. The possibility increased. I could stand upon punctilios no longer. I told my friend Gori where I was going, and feigning a trip to Venice, set out for Germany the 4th of August, a day, which, alas! will always bring to me bitter remembrances. For while with a joyful heart I was leaving to rejoin her, I knew not that in embracing my dear and inestimable Gori for a separation I intended should last only six weeks, I was leaving him for ever. I cannot speak or think of it, even now, after so many years, without bursting into tears. But I will spare my tears here, for I have given vent to them in another place where I have tried to honor his memory.

I now started on my journey, and taking the delightful and picturesque road I always travelled from Pistoja to Modena, I rapidly passed Mantua, Trent, and Inspruck, and went on through Suabia to Colmar, a city of upper Alsace, on the left bank of the Rhine. Near this city I at last found her whom I had sought and longed for during a separation of more than sixteen months. I accomplished the entire journey in twelve days, and yet I scarcely seemed to move, however fast I travelled. I opened a more abundant vein of rhyme during this journey than ever before, and in spite of myself composed three or four sonnets every day, being nearly transported out of myself in following her steps over the same road the whole distance, continually learning in answer to my inquiries that she had passed about two months before. With a heart, at times joyous, I began to think of joyous verses, and I wrote a chapter to Gori, giving him the necessary instructions for the care of my beloved horses, this being my *third* passion. I should have been ashamed to say my *second*, as I ought to give the Muses the preference over Pegasus.

This long chapter which I afterwards published with my rhymes was the first and almost the only poem I ever wrote



of that Bernesco school;\* and although it is not the kind to which I am naturally most inclined, yet I believe I have appreciated all its beauties and humor. Feeling and expression, however, are two very different things. But I did my best. On the 16th of August I saw the Countess! Two months flew by like lightning. Having once more a liberated heart, soul, and genius, fifteen days had not passed from the hour I recovered back my life in her presence, than I who for two years had not even dreamed of ever again writing tragedies, for I had cast aside the buskin when I finished my *Saul*, firmly resolved to write no more—now found I had almost without knowing it idiated three other tragedies at one stroke—*Agis*, *Sophonisba*, and *Myrra*. I had often thought of the first two, but had always cast them out of mind; this time, however, they were so vividly impressed on my imagination I was forced to cast the outline upon paper, thinking and hoping I never should be able to extend them. Of *Myrra* I had never thought before, and like every other incestuous love, it had always seemed to me unfit for Tragedy. That burning and truly divine language of *Myrra* to her nurse in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, fell under my eyes and caused me to burst into tears. In a flash the idea struck me of idiating it, for it seemed that a most touching and original Tragedy could be written provided the Author could so manage it that the Spectator should discover of himself by degrees, all the horrible tempests of the inflamed and pure heart of the much more unfortunate than sinful *Myrra*, without her even hinting the half, hardly confessing to herself, much less to another, so guilty a love. In fact I idiated it immediately, making her act in my Tragedy what Ovid relates. I now experienced an immense difficulty in keeping up that awful agitation of the soul of *Myrra* through five acts without borrowing incidents from other quarters. Add a consciousness of this difficulty acted as a continual spur to my mind in extending, versifying, and printing it: after completing it I learned this difficulty by experience. I fear I have not succeeded, but others will judge.

---

\* Bernesco is esteemed the head of this school in Italy.



These three new tragic creations inflamed my love of glory, which I only longed for, that I might share it with her, who was still dearer to me. I had now for a month passed my days joyously occupied, and free from all disturbing care, except from the horrible thought of being forced to another separation, in one short month. But as if this impending dread were not enough to pour infinite bitterness into the brief moments left me, cruel fortune dashed another bitter drop into my cup, to poison this fleeting pleasure. Letters from Siena, in the space of eight days, brought me first the news of the death of a younger brother of my dear Gori, and his own serious indisposition—and soon after I heard of his own death, after an illness of only six days. Had I not been with her I loved, when this unexpected bolt struck, the effects of my grief would have been more terrible. But it steals away a part of our sorrow, when we have one to weep with us. She knew my dear Francesco Gori, and she loved him well. The year before, after accompanying me to Genoa he went to Rome, almost entirely to become acquainted with her, and during several months they were frequently together—every day he used to accompany her in her visits to the works of art, of which he was an ardent lover and an exquisite critic. In weeping then with me, she not only wept for my sake, but for his, for she well knew his value. This calamity disturbed beyond measure the rest of the brief time we remained together, and as the fatal day of separation approached, this new parting seemed the more bitter and insupportable. The dreaded day at last came, and I bowed to my lot—well knowing when I parted from her, I was entering into the deep shades of loneliness and sorrow—torn from her, for I knew not how long, and deprived of my friend by a blow, which had fallen once and for ever. At every step of the same road, over which incoming grief and dark thoughts had all been chased away, now in my retracing it, they rolled over me again, with redoubled horror. Overcome by sorrow, I wrote but little, and wept continually, till I reached Siena, where I arrived in the early part of November. Many friends of *my* friend, who loved me for his sake as I did them, for the first few days increased my grief, gratifying but too well my

desire to know all the painful particulars of this sad calamity,—but while I dreaded to hear them, I was constantly asking of them the relation.

As may easily be believed, I returned no more to lodge in that house of weeping, and I have never visited it since. From my return from Milan, the year before, I had accepted from the good heart of my friend, a sunny and solitary apartment in his house, and there we lived like brothers.

But to stay in Siena without Gori, I could not. I tried by a change of place and scene to assuage my grief a little, without allowing his memory to fade from my heart. So in November I went to Pisa with the intention of passing the winter, waiting till a better fate should restore me to myself—for deprived of every resource of moral life, I could not feel myself alive.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

### STAY AT PISA—PANEGRIC OF TRAJAN, ETC.

THE Countess in the meantime had also returned by the Savoy Alps, Turin and Genoa, to Bologna, where she proposed to pass the winter—managing in this way to reside within the limits of the Pontifical States, without returning again to her Roman dungeon. She reached Bologna in December, and remained there under the pretext of the season being too far advanced. Here we were then, I in Pisa and she in Bologna, with only the Appenines between us, separated for five months, although so near each other. This was to me at the same time a consolation and a martyrdom. Every three or four days, I received fresh news from her, but I could not and ought not by any means to have tried to see her, on account of the gossip of the small Italian towns, where every one who rises a little above the herd, becomes the object of criticism by the indolent and scandal-loving crowd. So I dragged out in Pisa, that in-

terminable winter, with no solace but her Letters, wasting my time among my horses, and making little use of my faithful books. But sometimes I was driven to them, in an hour of *ennui*, when I could not ride or drive, particularly in the morning in bed as soon as I awoke. In these cursory glances I had turned over the Letters of the younger Pliny, whose elegance and copious information about Roman affairs afforded me great delight—besides this I was charmed with the pure soul and beautiful amiability so continually manifested by the author. After finishing the Letters, I took up the Panegyric of Trajan, a work I knew by fame. A few pages showed me a different man from the author of the Letters, and much less a friend of Tacitus, than he professed to be. I felt an indignation burst up from the bottom of my soul, and throwing the book on the floor, I rose up in bed where I lay reading, and seizing my pen in rage, cried out; “Ah! Pliny, if you were really the friend, the imitator, and the admirer of Tacitus, this is the way you should have spoken.” And without stopping or reflecting, I wrote away from impulse, half mad as it flowed from my pen, four large pages of my finest hand-writing, until I was half delirious and exhausted by the explosion. I flung it aside, and thought no more of it through the day. The next morning, taking up my Pliny once more, or rather the Pliny who had so fallen in my favor the day before, to continue the reading of the Panegyric, I read by main force a few pages more, and could get no farther. Then I took up the grand specimen of *my* style of Panegyric, written in a mad fit the previous morning. I read it and liked it, and the frenzy seizing me again stronger than ever, I conceived the idea of turning the joke into a matter of fact—and having distributed and divided my subject as well as I could, without taking breath, I went on writing every morning about two hours, which is as long as my eyes will serve me at hard work, and thinking and ruminating it over the whole day, as is always the case, when I cannot tell what gives me this fever of composition, I found the whole extended on the 5th morning, from the 13th to the 17th of March, and in almost the same form it now circulates in print.

(1785.) This work had rekindled my intellectual fire, and

given some truce to my sorrows—I now became convinced by experience, that to sustain those anguishes of heart under which I labored, and see the end without falling a victim, I must even by main force apply myself to work of some kind with vigor. But my mind is so much more independent than my will, it submits to no dictation, and if before reading Pliny, I had proposed to write a panegyric of Trajan, my intellect would not have drummed together two ideas. To deceive my grief and my brain, at the same time, I resorted to the remedy of engaging earnestly in some work of patience and toil. Having the Sallust at my hands, which some ten years before in Turin, I had for my own improvement alone translated into Italian, I had it copied side by side with the text, and set myself seriously to work, with a hope and determination of success. But as, even in this quiet work, I felt my mind incapable of continued tranquil application, I did not improve it very much—on the contrary I perceived that in the heat and delirium of a preoccupied and discontented heart, it is perhaps more easy to conceive and create a short and fiery piece, than coldly to correct something already written. The file is a weariness, and the mind wanders while we use it; but creation is a fever, which absorbs the genius while it lasts. So I cast aside my Sallust for calmer days, and turned to the continuation of my prose—*The Prince* and the *Letters*, which I had idiated and distributed in Florence several years before. I wrote the whole of the First Book, and two or three chapters of the Second.

The summer previous to my return from England to Siena, I had published the third volume of my Tragedies, and among many other distinguished characters, had sent it also to the learned Cesarotti, begging him to favor me with some light upon my style, distribution and management. In reply I received in April, a critical letter upon the three Tragedies of the third volume, which I answered immediately with many thanks, at the same time pointing out those things in his letter, which seemed to me objectionable, and beseeching him to indicate to me, or give me himself some model of tragic verse. It is worth noticing here that the same Cesarotti, who had conceived and executed in such masterly style, the sublime verses of Ossian,



on being requested nearly two years before to favor me with a model of Blank verse in Dialogue, spoke to me without a blush, of his translations from the French of the Semiramis and the Mahomet of Voltaire, printed many years before, and had the face tacitly to propose them to me as models. These Translations of Cesarotti are in the hands of every reader, and it is unnecessary to add anything further; everybody can judge of the matter, and compare his tragic verses with mine—and contrast them with the epics of the same Cesarotti in Ossian, and see if they seem to have come out of the same shop. But the fact will serve to show what miserable stuff we are all made of, and particularly we authors, who have the palette and the brush for ever in our hands, to paint other folks, but never the mirror to study ourselves.

A journalist of Pisa being obliged to publish *some* critical opinion of this third volume, thought it the shortest and easiest way to insert the letter of Cesarotti with my notes in reply. I remained at Pisa through the entire month of August (1785), and besides these prose-writings, I did nothing but copy my ten printed tragedies, and add in the margin a large number of alterations, which, at the time, seemed to me superabundant, but when I afterwards reprinted them in Paris they seemed to me by far too few, and I was obliged to quadruple them at least.

In May I had the pleasure of witnessing the Game of the Bridge, a most beautiful spectacle, which unites, I hardly know how to express it, something of the antique and heroic; and besides, another most beautiful *Festa*, of a different kind, the illumination of the entire city, according to the custom every two years, at the feast of San Ranieri. These feasts were celebrated together on the occasion of the arrival in Tuscany of the King and Queen of Naples, on a visit to the grand duke, Leopoldo, brother-in-law of the king. My vanity was fully gratified on this occasion, for my beautiful English horses carried away the palm triumphantly from all the rest which appeared there. But in the midst of this weak and puerile gratification, I felt not a little cut to think that in putrid, dead Italy, it was a thousand times easier to make a figure with a horse, than with a tragedy.

## CHAPTER XVI.

SECOND JOURNEY TO ALSACE—RESIDENCE THERE—THE TWO BRUTI AND ABEL—STUDIES ONCE MORE RESUMED WITH ENTHUSIASM.

THE Countess had set out from Bologna in the month of April, and journeyed on towards Paris. Wishing to return to Rome no more, she could in no place so conveniently settle as in France, where she had relations, friends, and interests. She remained at Paris till the latter part of August, and then returned to Alsace, to the same villa where we had met before. In the early part of September, with infinite joy and speed, I set out on my accustomed route, by the Tyrolese Alps.

I had lost for ever my friend at Siena—my lady had gone beyond Italy. I also determined to remain there no longer, and although at the time I neither desired it, nor could I fix my residence where she was, I tried to separate myself from her no farther than I was obliged to, and be divided, at the farthest, only by the Alps. So I moved my cavalry, and they arrived safe and sound a month after myself at Alsace, where I gathered all my things, except my books, these being left principally at Rome. But my felicity from this second union could last but two months, since the Countess was obliged to return to Paris for the winter. In December I accompanied her as far as Strasburg, where, to my infinite pain, I was constrained to leave her, and part for the third time. She kept on her road to Paris, and I returned to our villa. Although I was still unhappy, yet the burden of my grief had passed away—we were near each other; I could, without obstacle, and without danger of prejudice to her, visit her when I wished, and we were certain to meet again the next summer. All these bright hopes proved a balm to my health, and I now once more, with an emancipated genius, threw myself into the arms of the Muses.

In that single winter I accomplished far more work than I had ever done before in so short a time. I concentrated my thoughts upon one object, distractions and displeasures flew

away, and I shortened the hours while I multiplied their number. Scarcely having returned, I finished extending the *Agis*, which I had commenced at Pisa the December before, and then nauseated by the work (a difficulty I never experience in creating), I could prosecute it no further. When this was done, without taking breath, I extended the *Sophonisba* and *Myrra*.

(1786.) In January I extended entirely the second and third book of the *Prince*, and *The Letters*. I idiatised and extended the Dialogue of *Virtù Sconosciuta*—a tribute which I had long felt reproved for not having paid to the adored memory of my inestimable friend Gori. I afterwards idiatised entirely, and versified the lyrical part of *Abel*, the melo-drama, a kind of writing I shall speak of hereafter, if I have life and intellect, and means to effect what I propose. Once set upon making verses, I thought I would not abandon my poem, and I wrote a portion of the fourth canto, which was not entirely finished. So I copied, corrected, and united the three parts together, which, in the space of ten years, being written by piece-meal, had (and perhaps still have) some want of connection—a defect, however, which is not generally to be attributed to my compositions. The poem was hardly finished, when, in one of her frequent and always most grateful letters, the Countess alluded to a representation of the *Brutus* of *Voltaire*, which she liked exceedingly. I had seen it represented, perhaps ten years before, but had thought no more about it. But I was now—in a flash—fired with an instantaneous and disdainful emulation of head and heart, and I exclaimed, “What *Brutus*? The *Brutus* of a *Voltaire*? I will make a *Brutus*—two of them, and time shall show if these subjects of tragedy are treated better by me or by a plebeian born Frenchman, who, at the age of seventy and past, signs his name—‘*Voltaire, gentleman in ordinary to the king.*’” I said nothing more, and hinted not a word of it in my reply to the Countess. In a flash I idiatised a portion of the two *Bruti*, which I afterwards executed. In this manner, for the third time, I broke my resolution of writing no more tragedies, and from twelve, which they were to be, they arrived to nineteen. Upon the last *Brutus* I renewed my oath to *Apollo* more solemnly than ever, and I am almost certain not to violate it again. The years which are already on

me, hold me to bail, and I have many other things of a different description to perform, if I shall have strength and genius left to execute them.

I had now passed more than five months at the villa in a continual intellectual fever. It was my custom immediately after waking in the morning very early to write five or six pages to my lady; afterwards I worked till two or three in the afternoon; then I took a ride on horseback or in the carriage for two hours, while, instead of amusing and reposing myself, I was constantly thinking of my verses or my characters, thus wearying my intellect more than I refreshed myself by the exercise. In April I was seized with a violent attack of the gout through my shoulders, which for the first time nailed me to the bed, where I was kept without moving, and in great distress for at least fifteen days—a sad interruption to my studies so warmly resumed. But I had undertaken too much to live solitary and confined to books, nor could I without my horses have endured it so long, for they forced me to exercise in the open air. But even with them that perpetual increasing tension of the fibres of the brain could not last. And if the gout, more wise than I, had not effected a truce, I should have ended either with a delirium of the brain, or breaking down my physical constitution, for I had reduced my diet and sleep to the last extreme. But in May, thanks to my abstemious diet and perfect repose, I almost recovered. Some peculiar circumstances having prevented my lady from returning just then to the villa, and being obliged to defer the consolation of seeing her, I was overshadowed by a dark cloud which rested upon my spirit for more than three months, which interrupted my studies till the end of August, when my lounged for companion returned once more, and all my griefs and sad feelings flew away. Recovering my intellectual and physical health, I gave to oblivion all the sorrows of this separation, which for my good fortune was to be the *last*, and immediately resumed my labors with vigor and enthusiasm. I pursued them so warmly that by the middle of December, when we set out together for Paris I had versified Agis, Sophonisba and Myrra, extended the two Bruti, and written the first Satire. I did nine



years before in Florence idiated and distributed the subjects of this new kind of composition, and had also at the same time attempted their execution, but lacking both the master-ship of language and rhyme, I failed in my undertaking, so that being doubtful of ever succeeding in this style of verse, I had nearly thrown the idea aside. But the inspiring presence of the Countess had restored my ardor and courage, and setting myself to work I seemed to have succeeded at least in entering the lists, if not in running the course. Before I set out for Paris I collected all my rhymes, and found I had enough and perhaps too many.

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

JOURNEY TO PARIS—RETURN TO ALSACE—ARRANGEMENT WITH DIDOT OF PARIS TO PRINT MY NINETEEN TRAGEDIES—VIOLENT ILLNESS AT ALSACE, WHERE MY FRIEND CALUSO CAME TO PASS THE SUMMER.

(1787.) AFTER an uninterrupted residence of fourteen months in Alsace, I started with the Countess for Paris. I hated that city, but her presence made it a paradise. I was uncertain how long I should remain, and I left my beloved horses at the villa in Alsace, taking with me only some books and my manuscripts. At first the roar and the stench of that great chaos saddened me after so long a *villeggiatura*. Besides being lodged far from the Countess, and a thousand other disturbing causes which disgusted me beyond measure with that great Babylon, would have driven me off very quickly had I lived within and for myself. But this had not been the case for many years—I yielded with sadness to necessity, and sought to derive at least some advantage. But in the art of poetry I could learn nothing, since none of the literati of Paris understood our language above mediocrity, and then as to the dramatic art as a whole, although the French arrogate the palm

to themselves exclusively, yet my principles being different from those of their dramatic writers, I needed too much patience to sit and listen to their long and pompous recitations, which, despite the truth they might contain, were badly done. However, it being my way not to contradict or dispute, and above all to listen and yet believe scarcely any one, by degrees I learned from these characters the sublime art of silence.

That first stay of six months in Paris, if nothing more, decidedly improved my health. Before the middle of June I was to set out for the villa at Alsace. But in the meanwhile at Paris I had versified "The first Brutus," and by a very comical accident re-written the whole of *Sophonisba*. I read it to a Frenchman, one of my old acquaintances in Turin, where he had passed many years, a person very intelligent in dramatic affairs, and one too who had long before aided me by his wise counsel in my *Philip* when I read it to him in French prose, advising me to transpose the Council from the fourth Act, where it was, to the third, where it remains and where too it injures the progress of the action decidedly less than before, so that in reading *Sophonisba* to a competent judge I identified myself with him as much as possible to discover more from his countenance than his words his candid opinion. He listened to me without winking. But I, who on the other hand listened for both, began in the midst of the second Act to perceive the approach of a certain chill, which so much increased in the third that I could read no longer, and seized by an overwhelming impulse I cast it into the fire. We were standing all alone before the fire, which seemed tacitly to invite me to this act of unflinching and summary justice. My friend, taken by surprise at this strange movement, plunged his hands into the burning manuscript to recover it, but I had already seized the tongs, and in a flash I forced the poor *Sophonisba* so deeply into the flames with two or three pieces on fire that it was soon in a blaze, and like an expert executioner I held on the tongs till the last leaf was burned to ashes, and the fragments had disappeared in the chimney. This frantic trick was brother to that at Madrid, against poor *Elia*, but far less disgraceful, and

resulted in some little utility. I was now confirmed in the opinion I had often conceived of this subject of tragedy, that it was displeasing and treacherous, presenting at first blush a false tragic aspect, which would not stand the test of inspection, and I had about resolved to do nothing more with it; but the resolutions of an author are like maternal caprices. Two months after, the prose of the condemned Sophonisba fell under my hands, and in reading it over I found some good things in it, and began once more the versification, condensing it very much, and trying by the style to mask the inherent defects of the subject, and thus atone for them. Although I knew then and am still persuaded it is not and never can be a tragedy of the first class, I had nevertheless the courage to preserve it, because it is the only subject in which the high and sublime characteristics of Carthage and Rome can be appropriately developed, so that after all I set some value upon certain parts of this inferior piece.

My tragedies as a whole seeming to be now brought to a degree of maturity to justify a general publication, I resolved to reap at least some fruit from my stay in Paris, by arranging the print of an accurate and beautiful edition at my leisure without regard to expense or fatigue. Before deciding, however, upon any particular printer, I made an experiment of the Parisian type, foremen, and typographical arrangements, for a foreign language. Having the year before prepared my *Panegyric of Trajan* for publication, I made a trial with it, it being a short work which could be printed in less than a month. It was a happy experiment for me, for I afterwards changed my printer, greatly to the advantage of my works. So, having completed my arrangements with *Didot* the elder, a man exceedingly intelligent, impassioned of his art, and besides very accurate and quite expert in the Italian tongue, I began in May (1787) the print of the first volume of my Tragedies. But I began now more for the sake of engaging him in it, than from any other motive, as I knew very well I should set out in June for Alsace to remain till winter, and of course the printing could not make such progress. Yet we took measures to transmit to Alsace weekly the proofs for correction, and afterwards to send them to

Paris. In this manner I bound myself doubly to return to Paris in the winter—to which I felt no little repugnance. However, I wished to be bound equally by glory and love: so I left with *Didot* the manuscript of the prose pieces which were to be printed first, and the three tragedies I stupidly supposed were filed down and polished off for the last time. But I afterwards learned, when I came to print them, how terribly I had been deceived.

And now, the love of quiet, the sweetness of the Villa, and to be for a long time lodged there under the same roof with the Countess, with my books, my beloved horses around me; all these objects urged me warmly to return to the delightful retreat of Alsace. But another circumstance still was added to increase the pleasure of my return. My friend Caluso had given us hopes of his arrival at Alsace to pass the summer with us; he was the best man I knew—the best friend left me after the death of Gori. Some weeks after our arrival at the Villa, in the latter part of July, my lady and self set out for Geneva, to join him, and we returned with him through the whole of Switzerland to our Villa, near Colmar, where I had now clustered all my dearest treasures. The first conversation I had with my friend, contrary to all expectation, was on domestic affairs. He had received from my excellent mother a very strange commission, considering my age, occupations, and way of thinking. It was a *proposition of marriage*. He made the proposal with a smile, and with a smile I refused him. The answer was settled upon, that my most loving mother should excuse us both. But to give a specimen of the kind and simple manners of that excellent woman, I will give below her letter on the subject.\* When we had finished our

---

\* *Most dear and beloved son!—*

The 8th of the present month I wrote to Sig'r Abate di Caluso, to propose to you a most advantageous marriage with the daughter of illustrious parents, and an heiress to the principal part of the paternal estates. The father, in consequence of his extreme friendship for you, wishes to offer to you, in preference to all others, his only daughter, with the hope of



treaty of marriage, we poured out our hearts to each other in conversations upon our beloved Letters. I felt the absolute necessity of conversing about Art, speaking Italian, and talking of Italian affairs. I had felt for two years my privation of all these things, and greatly to my loss in the art of versifying. And certainly if these last famous Frenchmen, like Voltaire and Rousseau, had for a great portion of their life been wandering in different countries where their native tongue was neglected or unknown, without finding even one to converse with, they would not perhaps have had the imperturbability and tenacious constancy to write through simple love of the art, and merely to unburden the soul, as I have done for so many years in succession, forced by circumstances to live and converse for ever with barbarians. For such a term we can readily apply to all Europe, so far as a knowledge of our Italian literature is concerned, which constitutes, in a very great degree, Italy itself. Who, if we must write extravagantly of the Italians, who

---

seeing the house of Alfieri revived in this city. I make this offer to you through our friend, hoping he will be able to persuade you, since you can speak to him your sentiments with greater liberty, without fear of wounding my feelings, for God knows how much I love you, and that I can imagine nothing in this world that would afford me greater consolation than to see you established once more in the country and city of your birth. But still I would not influence you to a decision contrary to your taste and convenience, for I have but a short time to live, and you need not consult *me* in this enterprise. But I shall await your reply and communicate it to the one who acts for the young lady, and I hope to receive it either from yourself or Sig. Abate di Caluso, to whom I beg you will make my compliments. My dear husband salutes you. And embracing you with all my heart, I remain your most affectionate mother.

ASTI, 22d August (1787) 🍷

Being by nature almost destitute of curiosity, I have never sought or known or divined who my destined bride might be—neither do I think my friend knew himself—I never asked him, and he gave me no sign of knowing.

of them now writes verses, in which the art of Petrarch and Dante breathes? Who even in Italy really understands, enjoys, and vividly feels Dante and Petrarch?—One in a thousand is saying much. Nevertheless, immovable in the persuasion of the true and the beautiful, I prefer infinitely [and I will make this protest on all occasions], I prefer immeasurably to write in a language nearly dead, and for a people quite dead, and even to go to my own funeral, to writing in French and English, those deaf and dumb tongues, although their cannons and armies may go on forcing them into fashion. Rather Italian verses, if well turned, which remain for the present unknown, uncomprehended, or ridiculed, than ever to write French, or English, or any other *forcible* jargon, although they may be sure to be immediately read, applauded and admired by everybody. Too great is the difference in playing the noble and soothing harp to one's own ears, although no one may listen to thee, from sounding the vile bagpipe, although a whole mob of long ears listen only to give thee solemn applause.

But I return to my friend. I frequently unburdened to him my soul filled with such feelings; and it was a source of no little consolation to me. But this new and unmixed felicity of passing those happy days with those I loved so well, did not last. Two accidents came in to disturb our quiet. In riding with me on horseback, my friend received a fall and dislocated his wrist. At first I supposed he had broken his arm or something worse, and I was greatly alarmed. Immediately after an accident of a far more serious nature occurred to me. I was seized in two days with a violent dysentery, which increased to such a point that on the fifteenth day, having taken nothing into my stomach but ice-water, more than eighty foul evacuations passed me in 24 hours, and I was reduced to the point of death with scarcely a sign of fever. The want of natural heat was such that certain spiced-wine poultices applied to my stomach and ventricle to excite some action in those weak parts, although they were fermenting almost to the boiling point, and the attendants in administering them used friction on my hands and I on the body, yet they did not seem

warm to me, and I only complained because they were so cold. There was no longer any life in my system, except in my head, which although so weak still remained perfectly clear. After fifteen days my malady gave way slowly; but even after the thirtieth day the evacuations exceeded twenty in twenty-four hours. The disease, however, after six weeks, finally left me; but so emaciated and reduced that for four weeks longer, while I still kept my bed, they were obliged to carry me from one bed to another. I would not have believed myself able to support it. I could not think of dying and leaving my lady and my friend, and awake so soon from the dream of glory for which I had lived and labored more than ten years. And I felt too that of all the writings I should leave, none were brought to that perfection they would have received by the finishing strokes of after years. But I felt no little solace, on the other hand, if I were called to die, in the thought that I should die free, in the arms of the two friends I loved best, whose love and esteem I thought I had merited; and finally, to die before all the physical and moral infirmities of old age had come upon me. I had made known to my friend all my intentions for the printing of my Tragedies already begun, and he would have continued the work in my place. I became well convinced, however, afterwards, while I was getting those works through the press, which dragged along for nearly three years, from the assiduous, long and tedious labor I was obliged to expend upon the proofs, that if I had not lived to complete them myself, they would have never been done, and all my labors already expended before printing, been an entire loss. So essentially does the coloring and the finish constitute integrant parts of every poetical composition.

It pleased the fates to let me escape that time, and live to give the finishing stroke to my tragedies, which, if they have some gratitude, will recompense me by not suffering my name entirely to perish. I got up with difficulty, and I still remained for four months so feeble in mind, that all the proofs of the first three tragedies that successively in that time passed under my eyes, received not a tenth part of the emendations I should have made. This was the principal reason, why, two years

after, when the entire work was finished, I commenced again the reprint of those three tragedies from the beginning, solely to do justice to the art and myself; perhaps solely on my account, since very few certainly can appreciate the changes effected in the style, which, although each by itself may be a trifle, are, nevertheless, taken together, numerous and important, if not for the present, at least for coming time.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

RESIDENCE AT PARIS FOR MORE THAN THREE YEARS—PRINTING OF ALL MY TRAGEDIES—MANY OTHER WORKS PRINTED AT THE SAME TIME AT KEHL.

I HAD scarcely become myself again, when my friend, who had long before recovered from the dislocation of his wrist, having literary occupations at Turin, where he was Secretary of the Academy of Sciences, started for Italy, by the way of Strasburg. Although I was still infirm, yet to enjoy his society still longer, I accompanied him with the Countess. It was the month of October. Among many other sights, we visited the famous typographical establishment at Kehl, founded in princely style by Lord Beaumarchais, with the types of Baskerville, purchased by himself, and the whole designed for the numerous and varied editions of the complete works of Voltaire. The beauty of the type, the diligence of the workmen, and my acquaintance with Beaumarchais, who lived at Paris, induced me to avail myself of this opportunity of printing all my other works, except my tragedies, which the caprices of the Censors would have subjected to so many obstacles, since at that time not a few of these gentry were to be found even in France. I have always felt an indescribable repugnance against submitting to the dictation of a revision, before sending a work to press. Not that I would advocate the liberty of printing anything and everything. But for myself, I have followed the laws of Eng-



land, never to publish a writing which could not be freely, and without the slightest reproach to the author, published in happy England, which is, in truth, the only free country in Europe. Opinions as many as you wish—individuals offended, none—manners respected always. These have been, and always will be, my laws. No others can I rationally admit or respect.

Having obtained directly from Beaumarchais, at Paris, permission to avail myself of his admirable establishment at Kehl, I embraced this occasion, and left with his agents the manuscript of my five odes, which I had entitled *L'America Libera*, intending this little work to serve me as an experiment. And in fact it was so beautifully and accurately printed, I kept on for more than two years, printing the rest of my works there. The proofs were sent to me weekly, at Paris, and I was continually occupied changing and remodeling entire verses, which I did, not only through a restless desire to render my verses perfect, but in consequence of the singular complaisance and docility of the Kehl foremen, upon whom I can never bestow too much praise; being at the antipodes of the foremen, compositors, and pressmen, of Didot, at Paris, who have so long made my blood green, and so robbed my purse, arbitrarily making me pay so much gold for every alteration of a word; so, that instead of being rewarded in my life for correcting my mistakes and blunders, I have had to pay for doing it myself.

We returned from Argentina to the villa at Colmar, and a few days after, in the latter part of October, my friend set out for Turin, leaving me more than ever to long for his learned and bland society. I remained at the villa through November, and a part of December, and gradually recovered from the terrible attack with which I had suffered. In this weak state, I boldly versified the second *Brutus*, which was to be my last tragedy; and being the last to be printed, I should have abundance of leisure for criticizing it afterwards. We then went to Paris, where, in consequence of the printing I had begun, it was necessary I should fix myself; so I looked about for a house. I had the good fortune to find one, cheerful and quiet, standing by itself upon the new bulwark in the Suburb de St. Germaine, at the head of the Rue Mont Tarnasse, commanding a beautiful prospect—fine air, and

solitary as a country retreat—a companion of the villa in Rome, where I had lived two years at the Baths of Dioclesian. I took with me all my horses to Paris, but gave up to the Countess half of them for her service, which lessened my expense and distractions. Having thus got things arranged, I could closely attend to the difficult and disagreeable task of printing; and for nearly three years in succession I was buried in these occupations.

In February (1788) my lady received the news of the death of her husband, at Rome, where he had retired from Florence, more than two years before. And although this event had been anticipated for a long time, in consequence of his repeated violent attacks, and it left a widow in perfect freedom without the loss of a friend in the husband; yet, to my astonishment, I saw she was affected by a grief she could not have feigned or exaggerated; for no art ever entered into that spotless and incomparable character. And that same husband, despite the great disparity of their years, would have found in her an excellent companion and a friend, if not a loving wife, had he not so embittered her life, by his revolting, rough, and dissolute habits. I owed this testimony to simple truth. I continued the printing through '88; and being near the close of the fourth volume, I extended my essay upon all the tragedies, to insert afterwards at the end of the edition. I had, during the same year, at Kehl, finished printing the Odes, the Dialogue, Etruria, and the Rhymes.

(1789.) I now prosecuted the work with greater vigor for the next year, to emancipate myself once more; and I completed in August, at Paris, the six volumes of tragedies; and at Kehl, the two of my prose, the Prince—the Letters, and Tyranny, which was the last thing I had to print there. That year I had glanced over the Panegyric, first printed in '87, and finding a good many emendations to make, determined to reprint it. Besides, I wished to have all my works equally well printed. So I executed it in the same style with my work by Didot, and joined to it *L' Ode di Parigi Sbastigliato*, written from ocular observation of the beginning of those disturbances, and ended the whole volume with a *Favoluccia* (fable), suited to the times.

And now having emptied my bag, I held my peace. I had printed no other work except the melo-drama of Abel, since I designed to execute various other things in this new style, and a single translation—that of Sallust ; for I never thought of entering into the thankless and inextricable labyrinth of a translator.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

BEGINNING OF THE TUMULTS IN FRANCE—MY OPINIONS UPON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THIS KINGDOM.

FROM April (1789), I had lived in a constant fever of apprehension, fearing every day that some one of the many tumults every moment occurring in Paris, after the Convocation of the States General, would prevent me from finishing my works, which were now almost completed ; for I felt that after so many expenditures and fatigues, I ought not to be shipwrecked in sight of port. It disturbed me exceedingly ; but this was not the case with Didot's workmen, who being transformed into freemen, passed their time in reading and hearing the Gazettes, instead of composing, correcting, and printing the needed sheets. I thought I should go mad—what was my joy then, when the happy day at last came to finish, pack up, and send to Italy, and elsewhere, the belabored tragedies ! But my contentment did not last long, things were all the time growing worse, diminishing the quiet and security of this great Babylon, and increasing every day doubt and ominous forebodings for the future, so that persons who had anything to do with those *apes-cubs*, as unfortunately I and my lady had, were placed in constant dread ; for we could look for no happy issue of affairs.

(1790.) I have now for more than a year been a silent spectator of the progress of all the sad effects of the learned folly of this nation, where everybody can gabble but nobody ever conduct a matter to a happy result, for the simple reason that

they do not understand the practical government of men, as our political prophet Machiavelli long ago shrewdly observed. And over this matter I deeply lament, for I continually see the sacred and sublime cause of Liberty betrayed, mistaken, and reduced to scorn by these false philosophers. I am nauseated at the daily spectacle of so many false lights, so many half crimes, and nothing genuine except the folly of all parties. I am discouraged, finally, at seeing military power, lawless insolence and licentiousness, blindly substituted for the foundations of liberty. I now should desire nothing else but to be able to fly for ever from this fetid hospital, which is made up of the incurable and the insane; and I should to-day be out of it had not the better part of myself unfortunately been placed in embarrassing circumstances. I have now, for almost a year after finishing my tragedies, been vegetating rather than living, petrified by perpetual doubts and fears, passing my days wretchedly, and making my brain sterile by three years of continual printing and correcting, nor have I or can I turn myself to any laudable occupations. I have in the meantime received, and am constantly receiving, notices from many quarters, where the edition of my tragedies arrived, and it seems that they find sale and favor. But as the news I receive comes either from my friends or kind-hearted individuals, I do not allow myself to be greatly flattered by it. And, in fact, I am determined to pay no regard either to praise or censure, where it is unaccompanied by the reasons for such an opinion, and I wish the reasons luminous too, that they may be of some service to my art and myself. But of these reasons too little by far can be comprehended, and till now no one has arrived, so that all the rest I consider as though it had never happened. And although I knew all these things before, yet they have not caused me to spare either time or fatigue to do as well as I could. So much the more honor, perhaps, will be offered to my memory, since with this sad consciousness I have resolutely persevered in doing well what I have done, rather than executing it rapidly, as I never submit to pay homage and court except to the truth.

Of my six different works printed at Kehl, I will publish at



present only two,—*L'America Libera*, and *La Virtù Sconosciuta*—reserving the rest for less stormy times, when the vile imputation cannot be flung at me of having joined in the chorus of the base, repeating their words, which they never make good, because they cannot and know not how. But still I printed those works because the occasion was favorable, as I said; and I am convinced that he who leaves his manuscripts never leaves his books, no book being completed till it has been with great diligence printed, revised, and filed under the press by the author himself. A book may be written and finished without taking all this trouble, and such is often the case, but it is always a doubtful experiment.

Having nothing else now to do, harassed by gloomy presentiments, and believing (I ingenuously confess it) I had accomplished something in the last fourteen years, I determined to write this life, the whole of which thus far I have done in Paris, and brought down to the present time, when I find myself in my forty-first year. I'll bring to a close this portion of it, which will be certainly by far the larger part, closing with the 27th of May (1790). Nor do I think of reading it over, or bestowing another thought upon these scribblings till about my 60th year, if I shall live so long, an age in which I shall certainly have terminated my literary career, and then with that coolness of judgment which years will bring, I will again look over this writing, and add the history of these ten or fifteen years, as it may be, which perhaps I shall have still employed in composition and study.

If I live to execute something in two or three different styles, in which I design to try my last powers, I will add the history of my years so employed to this Fourth Epoch of my *Manhood*. If not, in resuming this general confession, I will with my sterile years begin the Fifth Epoch of my *Old Age* and *Dotage*, which, if my sense and judgment are still left me, I shall write very briefly, it being a matter useless in every respect.

But if in the meantime I come to die, which is very probable, I now pray some kind friend, into whose hands this manuscript may happen to fall, to make such a use of it as may seem to him best. If he shall print it as it is, there will be

discovered in it, I trust, the impulses of truth as well as the marks of haste, which will account for the rudeness and homeliness of the style. Nor to finish my life need that friend add anything of his own, except the time, the place, and the manner of my death. As to the dispositions of my mind, at the hour, my friend can tell the reader my name boldly, that knowing too well this deceitful and hollow world, I shall experience no other pain in leaving it except parting with her in whom and for whom only I live; for no other thought really makes me sad except the fear of losing her, and I only ask Heaven to take me away first. But if the friend, whoever he may be, into whose hands this manuscript shall fall, shall esteem it best to burn it, he will do well. I only ask that if he shall publish anything different from what I have written, it may be only in the style, which he may make as finished as he pleases, but not to alter a single fact or shade from what I have written. If in writing this life I have not had for my first scope the not very low motive of conversing of myself with myself, of contemplating myself as I am, and of showing myself half naked to the few who wished or shall wish to know me in truth, I should also most probably have known enough to compress the follies of these forty-one years into two or three pages at most, with studied brevity and haughty affectation dispraising myself.

But I should then have desired much more to show my genius than unveil my heart and manners. As for my genius, then (real or supposed, as it may be), I have had occasions enough of exploding my fire in my other works, and in this I wished to give a single ebullition, more simple but not less important, of my heart, discoursing upon myself diffusely, as old men talk, and incidentally upon other men, as they are seen in private chit-chat.

## CONTINUATION OF THE FOURTH EPOCH.

## NOTE OF INTRODUCTION.

[I HAVE now, thirteen years after it was written, read over, here in Florence, where I am settled, the preceding part written at Paris, up to my forty-first year, and copied it all, with some few alterations to render the style more clear and simple. Already engulfed in talking about myself, I think I will continue it, and give the history of these thirteen years, in which I seem to have accomplished some things worthy of being known. And as with advancing years my physical and moral powers are becoming feeble, and I have probably finished what I have to do in this world, I flatter myself that this second part, which will be very much shorter than the first, will also be the last. My almost 55 years have brought me to the threshold of old age, and, considering the serious labor of body and spirit I have gone through with, although I still live, yet I am accomplishing little, and shall have little to say.]

---

## CHAPTER XX.

## TRANSLATIONS OF VIRGIL AND TERENCE—MY OBJECT.

TIME hung wearily upon me in Paris. I had a great many literary projects, but I was too indolent to accomplish them. I began in June (1790), as a simpleton goes to work, translating those passages from the *Æneid* I loved best to read, finding it a useful and pleasing occupation. I took it up from the beginning, with the additional motive also of exercising myself in blank verse. I grew tired of working every day at the same thing, and to give the charm of variety to my studies, and improve myself in Latin, I began the translation of Terence. I

trusted the study of so pure a model would facilitate the design I had of one day writing comedies myself in a style no less original than I flattered myself to have done in my tragedies.

Taking the *Æneid* one day, Terence the next, from 1790 to April, 1792, when I left Paris, I had finished the first four books of the *Æneid*, and three of the comedies of Terence. To divert my mind the more from gloomy fancies, I tried to refresh my memory again; (from which composing and printing had driven everything out) with passages from Horace, Virgil, and Juvenal, and once more I took up Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto, learning thousands of verses by heart. But still all these occupations impoverished my brain and deterred me from accomplishing anything original of my melodramas, of which there were to have been six at least. I never got further than Abel. I had made too many sad mistakes in life, I had lost my time, my youth, and the enthusiasm so necessary for such a creation, and I never could recover these treasures again. For the last year I stayed at Paris, and the two following, I wrote nothing original but some epigrams and sonnets to give vent to my just indignation against the slave-trade, and feed my melancholy. I tried also to write a *Conte Ugolino*, a mixed drama, to be united with the *Tramelogédie* if I had executed them. I initiated it, but never could extend it.

(1790.) In October I made with the Countess a trip of fifteen days into Normandy, to Caën, Havre, and Rouen. A sight of this beautiful rich province, new to me, afforded me great delight. Three years of printing and disturbances had almost blighted my mind and body. The affairs of France were every day becoming more and more disturbed, and we resolved to try if we could not find some more peaceful and secure retreat. The Countess had long desired to visit England, the only land really free, and we prepared for our journey.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### FOURTH JOURNEY TO ENGLAND AND HOLLAND—RETURN TO PARIS.

(1791.) WE set out towards the close of April for London, and having an intention to remain there some time, we took with us our horses, and gave up our house in Paris. In a few days we were in London. The Countess was not pleased with everything she saw, and I had grown old not a few years since my two former visits. I had still some admiration for the government, but the climate and the artificial manner of life, I found more intolerable than ever—always at the table—out of bed till two or three in the morning—a life at war with letters, genius, and health. I began to feel once more twinges of the gout which in that blessed Island is absolutely indigenous, and when the first novelty was over the Countess was anxious to quit the country.

In June, occurred the well known flight of the French king, who was seized in Varennes, as every one had foreseen, and conducted back to Paris more of a prisoner than ever. This event embroiled still more the affairs of France, and we both felt the greatest solicitude for our pecuniary interests. More than two thirds of our investments were in France, where the scarcity of money had given origin to a fictitious and suspicious paper that flooded the country, so that one found his property dwindling away in his own hands every week; at first a third, then half, then two thirds, and finally to almost nothing. Saddened by this circumstance, and forced by necessity, we bowed to our lot, and returned to France, the only place where our bad paper (shin-plasters) would pass, but with a prospect of seeing still worse times. Before leaving England we made a tour of the Island, visiting Bath, Bristol, and Oxford, and returning to London, embarked at Dover.

Here I encountered an incident of romance I will briefly relate. During my third visit to England in '83 and '84, I had

never learned or inquired a word about that notorious Signora who had made me, in my second visit, jeopardize so many verses. I had only heard incidentally that she no longer lived in London, that her husband, from whom she had been divorced, was dead, and that she was supposed to have married another, obscure and unknown. But during this fourth visit for more than four months while in London, I had not heard a word, nor made an inquiry about her. In fact, I knew not whether she was dead or alive. In going on board the vessel at Dover a few minutes before embarking to see that all was right, who should I see among the crowd around the pier but that same *character*! I recognized her immediately. She was still perfectly beautiful, and twenty years had scarcely changed her. It seemed like a dream. I looked again, and a smile on her face while she gazed at me convinced me it was a reality. I cannot tell how I felt. She said not a word. I entered the ship and waited for the Countess. She arrived in a quarter of an hour, and we weighed anchor. She told me that the gentleman who had accompanied her on board had pointed out the same lady and given her name, adding some outlines of her past and present life. I related the manner in which we had met, and the facts as they were, for between the Countess and myself, no deceit, diffidence, contempt, or quarrels, ever existed.

Not a little affected by so unexpected a sight, I gave vent to my feelings in a letter to her which I sent to the banker of Dover to be consigned into her own hands, and he was to forward me the answer at Brussels where I should arrive in a few days. My letter, of which I regret not having retained a copy, was certainly full of excited feelings, not of love, but of a true and deep commotion of heart at seeing her still leading a wandering life, so ill becoming her station and birth, and the increased pain I felt in thinking I had been, however unwillingly, either the cause or the pretext of it all. She might have escaped the scandal of which I had been the cause, had she not revealed it by her own imprudence, and afterwards retrieved her character in after years. Four weeks after, her answer reached me at Brussels. It showed an obstinately

confirmed bad character, rarely met with in the fair sex. At Calais we determined to make a tour through the United Provinces before we went back to our French prison. Another opportunity might never be presented for seeing a country so filled with monuments of industry. We followed the coast along to Bruges and Ostend, and then on to Anverse, Rotterdam, Holland, the Hague, and North Holland, for three weeks. The last of September we returned to Brussels where the Countess met her sisters and mother, and remained a week. Finally, towards the close of October, we again entered once more this *Great Sink* where our straitened circumstances drew us contrary to our will, and constrained us to think seriously of fixing our permanent abode.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

FLIGHT FROM PARIS THROUGH FLANDERS AND GERMANIA TO ITALY,  
WHERE WE SETTLE AT FLORENCE.

(1792.) NEARLY two months were consumed or rather wasted in finding and furnishing a beautiful and commodious house. Every day we hoped a new and more tolerable state of things would succeed, but oftener still we despaired of that time ever coming. In this state of perturbation, like everybody else in Paris and in France who had anything to lose, we wretchedly dragged out the days. Two years before all my books had been brought from Rome, where they had been left in 1783. I had considerably increased their number in Paris, and during this last journey through England and Holland. I now lacked nothing to make up the library I needed in my limited literary sphere. In the midst of my books and the sweet country, I lacked no domestic consolation. I only needed the cheering hope it would last. This thought disturbed every occupation, and forced me to become a translator of Virgil and Terence, as I could do nothing else. In the meantime neither during this

or my former sojourn in Paris had I any inclination to become acquainted, or have any connexions with any of those manufacturers of spurious liberty, for whom I felt the deepest repugnance and contempt. And even to this day, after this tragical farce has lasted more than fourteen years, I can boast of virgin purity in this respect. For I have never seen, or heard, or spoken with any one of these domineering French slaves, nor with any one of their servile creatures.

In March I received letters from my mother—they were her last. They spoke her warm and Christian affection, and her deep anxiety to see me. “You are in a country,” said she, “so filled with confusion, where the exercise of the Catholic Religion is no longer free, and where all are continually trembling, and awaiting momentary disorders and misfortunes.” Her words were too true, and soon it all came to pass. But when I once more approached Italy this worthy and venerated matron was no more! She passed from this life the 23d April, 1792, at the age of 70 years.

In the meanwhile the war with the Emperor, which afterwards became general and bloody, had been declared. In June an effort was made to blot out the last vestige of the name of King. The plot of the 20th June had failed—things dragged along once more sadly as before, until the memorable 10th of August, when the explosion came on. After this event took place I wasted not another day, my first and only thought being to deliver my lady from danger, and from the 12th I was overwhelmed with the confusion of getting ready to set out. The only difficulty that now remained was in obtaining passports to leave Paris and the Kingdom. But we worked with so much energy during those two or three days that by the 15th or 16th we had obtained them as foreigners, mine from the Minister of Venice, and the Countess’s from the Minister of Denmark, the only foreign Ministers still near that image of a King. Afterwards with great difficulty we obtained from the session our *comunitativa*, called “*du Mont Blanc*,” and other passports, one for each individual, for ourselves, for every servant, and the *femme de chambre*, with a description of each one’s stature, complexion, age, sex, and I know not what.



Thus furnished with all those slavish patents, we prepared to leave the 20th of August. But I had a just presentiment of what was going to happen, and being all prepared we anticipated the day of starting, and set out on Saturday the 18th, after dinner. At the *Barrière blanche*, our most convenient exit for Calais, towards which we were hastening, as the nearest point of escape from the kingdom, we found three or four of the National Guards, with an officer who gave the *visé* to our passports, and prepared to open the gates of that immense prison, and bid us God speed on our journey. But near the *Barrière* there was a low tippling-house, from which came rushing forth some thirty *loafers*, of the lowest class, shirtless, drunken, and furious. Two carriages filled with people, loads of trunks, imperials, male and female servants! These fellows now screamed out that all the rich were flying from Paris with their treasures, and leaving the poor behind in their miseries and sorrows. An altercation then arose between the Guards and this band of bloody thieves, the former insisting upon our going on, the latter upon stopping us. I leaped from the carriage into the midst of them, armed with my seven passports, and screamed, and yelled, and scolded worse than they—the only way to deal with Frenchmen. They read them one by one, by means of one of their number who could read, and saw the descriptions of our respective figures. Foaming with anger and fury, and reckless of our terrible danger, three times I held up my passport in my hand and cried in a loud voice, “Look at me and listen. My name is Alfieri. I am an Italian, and not a Frenchman, tall, lean, pale, red hair, here I am, examine me. I have the passports—we have obtained them from the proper authority—we wish to pass, and we will, by Heaven!” The scene lasted over half an hour. I showed good courage and that saved us. In the meantime a large crowd had gathered around the two carriages, and many of them cried out, let’s burn the carriages—others, let’s stone them,—others, they are flying—they are some of the rich nobles, let us carry them back to the city palace, and bring them to justice. At last the feeble help of the four National Guards, who put in a word for us now and then, with my furi-

ous imprecations in the voice of a town-crier, holding up and showing the passports, and above all the half an hour and more the apes tired themselves out by their gab, turned the current in our favor, and the guards beckoned me to get into the carriage again where I had left my lady, in what state can be easily imagined. I entered—the postillions mounted their horses, the gate opened, and we went forth, attended by the hisses, insults, and curses of the mob. And lucky it was too they did not insist upon taking us back to the *Hotel de Ville*, for two loaded carriages arriving in pomp with the odium of flight would have been a tempting bait for a plebeian mob, and once brought before the thieves of the municipality we should have been plunged into prison, where, had we found ourselves the 2d September, only fifteen days afterwards, we should have figured in that brutal slaughter of so many gallant men. Two days and a half after our escape from this infernal prison we reached Calais, showing our passports perhaps forty times or more on the road. We afterwards learned that we were the first foreigners who left Paris or the Kingdom after the catastrophe of the 10th of August. At every municipality on the road where we were obliged to show our passports, those who read them remained stupified and thunderstruck at the first glance of passports printed with the name of the King *cancelled*. They either did not know or had been falsely informed of what had happened at Paris, and they all trembled. These are the auspices under which we finally escaped from the country, hoping and resolving never to set foot in it again. We arrived at Calais, where we met with no difficulty in going to the frontiers of Flanders, through Gravlines, but we preferred to go on immediately to Bruxelles, where the Countess wished to repose after all her agitations a short month at the villa of her sister, and her excellent brother-in-law. We there received letters from the servants we had left in Paris, informing us that on Monday, the very day we had fixed upon to set out (20th August), but which I had so fortunately anticipated by two days, that same Session which had given us our passports had (see their stupidity and sadness) gone in a body to arrest my lady and conduct her to prison. And why? She was rich,

noble and pure. To myself they did not at this time accord this honor. But not finding us, they had confiscated our horses, furniture, books, and everything. Afterwards they sequestered our incomes, and declared us *emigrated*! And then came on the catastrophe and horrid senes of the 2d September, and we rendered our grateful thanks to Providence for having made our escape.

The sky of France became every day blacker; a new Republic was founded in blood and terror. Gainers in spite of our losses, we set out on our road to Italy the first of October, and through Aix-la-Chapelle, Frankfort, Augusta and Inspruck, we came to the Alps. We ascended them with joyful steps, and daylight seemed to dawn over their snow-tops when we looked down into that sweet land, where is heard the "Si."—The luxury of having escaped from our prison, of travelling over these same roads with her, for whom I had so many times raced over them in seeking, the satisfaction of being able to enjoy with freedom her pure society, and under her kind auspices, once more to resume my cherished studies, made me so calm and serene, that from August till we reached Tuscany, the Muses came back to inspire me once more, and I was producing rhymes in abundance.

We at last arrived at Florence the third of November, where we have remained ever since. Here I found again the living treasure of language, which fully compensated me for all the heavy losses of every description I had sustained in France.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

GRADUAL APPLICATION TO STUDY—TRANSLATIONS FINISHED—DELIGHTFUL HOUSE IN FLORENCE—REHEARSALS.

It was nearly a year after our arrival at Florence, before we could find a house that pleased us. But I heard that language, so beautiful and so precious, spoken once more—my Tragedies

were often the subject of conversations, where I went—I often saw them represented—and it all kindled once more the literary flame, which had nearly died away. My first piece after three years of idleness, was the *Apology of King Louis XVI.*, which I wrote in December (1793). I then took up again my translations of Terence and the *Æneid*, and by constant labor, brought them to a close in '93, but they were yet in an imperfect state. Sallust had been the only thing I could apply myself to during our journey to England and Holland, if I except the works of Cicero, which I read again and again, with enthusiasm; I had done much towards correcting and filing it down, and during this year I re-copied it entirely, and supposed I had given it the last touch. I extended also an *Historical Satire* in prose, upon the affairs of France, which I made serve as an introduction to a collection of fugitive rhymes, sonnets and epigrams, on those laughable and painful events. The entire work I entitled "*The Misogallo*,"—and the satire gave a pretty good foretaste of the book.

I was now once more enticed back to my studies. The Countess as well as myself had been stripped of her fortune—but we were still able to live comfortably. I loved her continually the more; just in proportion as she suffered adversity, the dearer and more sacred did she become, and as my soul found rest in her affection, the more ardent was my love of knowledge. But I lacked the books to aid me in the difficult studies I wished to prosecute. A hundred and fifty volumes of the pocket edition of the classics were all I had saved of my Library—the rest were lost in Paris, nor had I ever asked a question about them of a soul, except once of an Italian friend at Paris (1795), in a humorous epigram, in which I demanded my books. The Epigram and the answer will be found in a note to the second prose piece of the *Misogallo*. I had laid out my plan for at least five other Melo-dramas, after the style of the *Abél*—but I was obliged to abandon them. The creative fire of my youth had wasted itself away—my fancy had lost its brilliancy, the last precious years of my youth had been shorn of their beauty and strength, by the fatigue of printing, and the troubles that overwhelmed me. I no longer felt my early pow



er; that energetic enthusiasm, so necessary to such work, was extinguished for ever. I had so long cherished this project, that I abandoned it with pain, and turned my attention to Satires. I had yet written but one, which served as the Prologue of the rest. Some passages of the *Misogallo* had called for satire, and I did not despair of success—I wrote the second and a portion of the third; but I was not yet fully collected—badly lodged,—destitute of books, and I had little heart for anything.

This led me to engage in rehearsals, a new pastime for me. In Florence there were several young gentlemen and one lady, gifted with capacity and genius, for such amusements, and we took up *Saul* and rehearsed it, in a private house to a small auditory under great disadvantages, in the spring of '93. At the close of the year we found, near the Bridge S. Trinita, a most delightful house on the Lung' Arnō. We entered it in November; I have occupied it till now and shall probably live in it till I die, unless fate drives me away. The air, the view, and the convenience of this house restored to me in a great degree my intellectual and creative powers, except for Melodramas, which I never tried again. The year before, I had played the simpleton, by taking a part in the rehearsal of one of my own Tragedies, and this spring (1794), I lost three months in getting up rehearsals in my house, of *Saul* and the first *Brutus*, in both of which I took a part. They said, and I thought so too, that I made no little progress in the difficult art of recitation, and if I had been younger, I believe I should have succeeded very well; for, on every repetition, I felt an increase of power, of ardor, gradation of tone, and the indispensable variety of haste and tardiness, loudness and softness, calmness and excitement, which change with the thoughts, and give them their peculiar coloring, sculpture the character, and stamp the words in brass. The company too, under my training, improved every day, and I was perfectly certain that if I had had money and time, and health to do it, in three or four years I could have formed a company of tragedians, if not perfect, at least infinitely superior to any of the so-called Tragedians of Italy.\*

---

\* These private rehearsals constitute one of the most charm-

(1795.) This pastime threw me back in my studies for the whole year '94, and a part of '95, when I wore the buskin for the last time, in the rehearsals, at my house, of the *Filippo* (in which I alternately represented the two opposite characters of *Filippo* and *Carlo*), and the *Saul*, which was my favorite—for his character is all that character can be. A company of *Signori dilettanti* were to have a recitation of *Saul*, at Pisa, during the Festa of the *Illumination*. I was invited, and I had the vanity to go. I recited, once, and for the last time, my chosen part—*Saul*, and here ended my theatrical life—I died the death of a king!

Two or three years in Tuscany had again given me a little library, and I once more possessed nearly all the literature I had before, and even increased my list of Latin classics. I added, I can't tell why, all the Greek classics, of the best editions, with the Latin translations, for the sake of having them, and knowing their names, at least.

---

## CHAPTER XXIV.

CURIOSITY AND SHAME COMPEL ME TO READ HOMER, AND THE GREEK TRAGEDIANS, IN LITERAL TRANSLATIONS—HEARTLESS PROSECUTION OF MY SATIRES, AND OTHER TRIFLES.

BETTER late than never! I was now more than 46 years old; for good or for evil, I had practised and professed the art of lyric and tragic poetry for 20, and the thought that I had never read a line of the Greek Tragedians, or Homer, or Pindar, made my cheek burn with shame. I now felt a laudable

---

ing features in the Social Life of the Italians—of fire-side and home in an English or American sense, they know little and care less. They love to take their fire-sides around with them, to an Opera of *Donnizetti*, a Tragedy of *Alfieri*, or a Comedy written and acted by themselves.

curiosity to see for myself what these Fathers of Lyric and Tragic Song had said. I yielded the more implicitly to this mortification and curiosity, for many years of travels, horses, printing, correcting, troubles, and translations, had made me just enough of a simpleton to aspire to become a *learned man*, *i. e.*, to have a very good memory of other men's thoughts. Unfortunately my memory, which had once been excellent, had already begun to fail me. But still, to drive off sloth, to throw away the buskin, and recover a little from my stupidity, I set myself to work. I successively went over, inch by inch, Homer, Hesiod, the three Tragedians, Aristophanes, and Anacreon, studying them through the medium of the literal Latin translations, printed side by side with the text. With Pindar, I soon saw it was killing time; his high Lyrics, literally translated, became perfectly stupid; I could not read them in the original, and I let them go. In this hard, disagreeable, and almost useless study, I wasted a year and a half.

(1796.) I was making, however, some progress in writing: the Satires increased to seven. This was a fatal year for Italy. The invasion of the French, threatened for three years, at last took place—it threw a shade over my intellect, and haunted my fancy with images of misery and servitude. Piedmont lost—my last remaining hope of maintenance would vanish in smoke. But I was prepared for the worst—determined never to beg, or humble myself, and support one or all the miseries fate could send. But there was one noble refuge left for me, from so many sad and discouraging prospects, and I fled to my books.

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

### REASON, MANNER, AND DESIGN, OF MY STUDYING GREEK.

As long ago as 1778, while my dear Caluso was in Florence, I got him, one day, to gratify my idle curiosity, by writing

down, on a loose sheet of paper, the Greek characters in great and small letter. I learned their forms and names, and thought no more of it for many years. But when I undertook to read these literal translations from the Greek, I hunted among my papers for the Caluso Alphabet. I found it, and went to work, making the letters again, and giving them their names, only with the idea of casting my eye occasionally upon the column of Greek, to become familiar with the sounds of the compounded words. From time to time I cast, upon that column of letters, eyes as restless and envious, as the fox, in the fable, on the longed for grapes. But I was met on the threshold by a strong physical obstacle, for my eyes seemed determined to know nothing of those cursed characters, large or small ; but I went on, spelling out with great pains, and carrying away a short word at a time ; but an entire line, I could neither read, nor look at, nor pronounce, and much less remember. I hated grammar—my eyes I could not hold steadily on a page. I was dull at languages, for I had twice or three times dug away at the English, without making even an impression. I had become an old man, without ever knowing any grammar, not even the Italian, for I was saved from gross blunders in my writings, by having read so much, and not because I could give the grammatical reasons—very choice assortment of obstacles, physical and moral, to an old man, who proposes to undertake the conquest of Greek ! But I was sick of those translations, and I made a secret resolution I would conquer the Greek : but I breathed not my purpose to any living soul, not even to the Countess ! I had already passed two years on the borders of Greece, without entering the country, except by a glance of the eye ; I was indignant, and I determined to make the conquest.

(1797.) I bought two grammars, a Græco-Latino, and one entirely in Greek. Comprehending, and not comprehending, repeating all day, the verb *τύπτω*, the circumflex verbs, and the verbs in *μ*. This very soon opened my arcana to the Countess ; she saw me continually moving my lips, and she resolved to find out what it meant, and she did. Persevering, forcing my eyes, my mind, and my tongue, up to the work, at the close of



the year, I could get over a page of Greek, in any character, prose or verse, without feeling my eyes tremble, and understand the text perfectly, using the Latin column now, as I had before used the Greek. I acquired a good pronunciation, by closely adhering, in reading aloud, to the aspirates, accents, and diphthongs, as they are written, and not as they are stupidly pronounced by the modern Greeks, who have an alphabet of five *iotas*, making their language a continual *iota*cism, more worthy of the neighing of horses, than the most harmonious tongue in the world. I conquered the difficulty of reading, by practising aloud, not only my daily lesson, for two hours in succession, understanding scarcely an *iota*—Herodotus entire, Thucydides twice, with his commentator—Xenophon all his shorter orations, and twice Procles' Commentary of the Timæus of Plato, only because they were more difficult to read, being full of abbreviations.

This terrible labor, so far from exhausting my intellect, as I feared, recovered me from the lethargy of years. In '97 I brought my Satires up to 17, as they now stand. I made a new collection of my too numerous rhymes, and corrected, as I copied them. Finally, becoming enamored more and more with Greek, as I understood it better, I began, and translated the Alceste of Euripides, the Philoctetes of Sophocles, and the Persians of Æschylus, and last, to give a trial of all, the Frogs of Aristophanes—neither did I neglect the Latin. During the year '97 I studied Lucretius, Plautus, and Terence, whose six comedies I translated (by piece-meal), without ever having read one of them entire. So I can facetiously say with truth, I translated him before reading him, and without reading him at all.

I also learned the different metres of Horace, ashamed of having read him till I knew him by heart, without knowing anything of his measures. I gained, too, a clear idea of Greek measures, particularly in the choruses of Pindar and Anacreon. In fact, during the year '97 I shortened my ears at least a palm. I had no other object in all these labors than to smother my curiosity, recover my intellectual power and activity, and destroy the tediousness of thinking about the French—in a word, to un-Frenchify myself.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

FRUIT OF MY GREEK STUDIES—I WRITE (LAST PERJURY AGAINST APOLLO) L'ALCESTE SECONDA.

(1789.) I now neither expected nor desired any other fruit of these last labors but that good Father Apollo would grant me one more favor, and this did not seem to me a small one. While I was reading the literal translations in '96, after going over Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, and the five Tragedies of Euripides (I had never in my life heard of his *Alceste*), I was so fired with that sublime subject that after its perusal I wrote on a scrap of paper I still have, these words: "Florence, 18th January, 1796. Had I not already secretly vowed never to write another tragedy, this *Alceste* of Euripides has so inflamed me, I would even now leap upon my feet while the fire burns, and extend the scenery of a new *Alceste*, availing myself of all that's good in the original, and rejecting all that is inappropriate, which is no small part. And, first of all, I would diminish the number of the characters." I even added their names, and afterwards thought no more of the scribbling. I read the rest of Euripides, but none of his works so deeply impressed me as this. When I came once more to take up Euripides (for I read everything twice at least), I experienced the same passion, the same transport, the same desire, as before, and in September of the same year ('96) I extended the sketch, with the intention however of never finishing it. But in the meantime I had referred to the Latin translation, and at last in May, '98, on returning home one day, after a walk, I sat down under an intense excitement, and wrote the first act at a single stroke. On the margin I wrote these words: "Extended with maniac fury and many tears." I extended the other four acts several days after under the same impulse, and finished the whole the 26th of May. After being delivered of this long and obstinate offspring, I found peace. But still I neither designed to versify it

nor bring it to a finished state. In September, while I was still applying myself closely to the Greek, I felt anxious to compare my first translation of *Alceste* with the original, to render it more complete, and also to improve my knowledge of that tongue, which can in no way be so well done as by translating it with a determination of giving the force of every word, image, and figure. Once more buried in *Alceste*, I was seized for the fourth time with the fever of my own. I took it up, read it again, and wept over it with transport. The 30th of September I began the versification, and the 21st of October it was finished, with the choruses. Such is the history of my perjury, after a silence of ten years. But resolute to escape the imputation of plagiarism and ingratitude, and knowing very well the tragedy was Euripides' and not mine, I placed it among my translations, where it stands as *Alceste Seconda*, inseparably connected with *Alceste Prima*, its mother. Of this last perjury I had said not a word even to the Countess, and I now resolved to derive from it some amusement. So in December I read this production to a select company invited to hear it, as a translation of the tragedy of Euripides. Those who had not a fresh recollection of it were cheated till after the third act, but those who remembered the original discovered the joke—it began with Euripides and ended in Alfieri.

The tragedy gave satisfaction, and although there was much to be done to render it complete, I liked it pretty well. I have told all about this affair, for if this tragedy is ever esteemed, the reader can appreciate a poet's fire, the reason why those who try often fail, and why sometimes one may succeed in spite of himself. If the tragedy be condemned as worthless, the reader will have a double laugh at my expense, and this chapter will be received as an anticipation of the Fifth Epoch, stolen from my Manhood and given to my Old Age.

When this production was known in Florence, it revealed my study of Greek, which I had always concealed even from my friend Caluso, who found it out in the following manner. I had sent to my sister at Turin, in May, my portrait beautifully painted by Fabre of Montpelier. On the back of it I had written two verses of Pindar. Delighted with the picture, she

examined it carefully, and discovering the Greek scribbling on the back, called my friend Caluso to interpret it. The Abbé saw that I knew at least the Greek characters. Persuaded I would not have played off the vain and pedantic imposture of writing an epigraph I did not understand, he immediately wrote to me, charging me with deception, since I had never spoken to him of this new study. I replied in a Greek note, which I wrote as well as I could entirely alone, and he judged it not to be badly done by a student 50 years old, who had taken up the grammar only 18 months before. I also accompanied the epistle with four specimens of my translations, to indicate my progress in study. This mite of praise inspired me to prosecute my Greek with still greater enthusiasm, and I set myself to the useful exercise I had so extensively practised with Latin and Italian, of learning hundreds of verses, from different authors, by heart.

But during the same year ('98) I received and answered several letters from a person very different in every respect from my friend Caluso. Lombardy, as everybody knows, had since 1796 been invaded by the French. Piedmont vacillated; a deceptive truce, under the name of peace, had been made by the Emperor at Campo Formio, with the Dictator of France. The Pope had trembled, and occupied, and *Schiavi-democratizzata* his Rome.\* Everything around breathed misery, indignation, and horror. At that time M\*\*\*\* was French ambassador at Turin, of the class or trade of Parisian Literati; he was then at work sordidly in Turin, in the sublime enterprise of overthrowing an already conquered and disarmed king. I unexpectedly received a letter from him, to my grand surprise and displeasure, in which he proposed, in an affected, contemptible, and pompous style, to restore me my books, which the thieves had robbed from me at Paris. I rejected his offer with pride and contempt. It would be laughable if I should here show the note of my books which he said he wished to restore to me. It contained about 100 volumes of all the discarded and least esteemed Italian works; and this was my collection, left

---

\* *Enslaved and democratized.*



in Paris six years before, of 1600 volumes at least, embracing all the choice editions of the Italian and Latin classics. But no one should be surprised at such a note, when he knows it was a French restitution !\*

---

\* Candor and justice can never exculpate Alfieri for the course he took in this affair. His correspondence with the ambassador places the poet in anything but a desirable light. This generous and courteous Frenchman, either privately as a friend of letters, or officially as the representative of a brave and chivalric nation, had gathered all the precious volumes of Alfieri that could be found, after they had (like the goods of many Frenchmen themselves) been confiscated ; and certainly so delicate and generous an act should have softened the heart of Alfieri ! But he had, as he declares in another place, imbibed in his early youth an inveterate prejudice against France and Frenchmen he could not afterwards subdue. This, and this only, satisfactorily accounts for the deep animosity with which he opposed the movements of France at home and abroad. Alfieri hated tyranny, but he was so blinded with prejudice, he could see in the French revolution nothing but *blood*. The overthrow of the most rotten and disgusting despotism ever consolidated—the vindication, in a single hour, of the wrongs of a score of generations—the diffusion throughout Europe of the spirit of independence that will ere long work the EMANCIPATION OF THE OLD WORLD—the regeneration of the millions of France, morally, socially, politically,—all this he could not see. Thus much I felt it my duty to say. I admire Alfieri, but his vices and his prejudices are no better than those of any other man.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

MISOGALLO—L'ABELE, THE TWO ALCESTES AND L'AMMONIMENTO FINISHED—WEEKLY DISTRIBUTION OF STUDIES—PROVIDED WITH MY TOMB-STONES, I AWAIT THE FRENCH.

(1799.) The danger of Tuscany was every day increasing. In Dec., '98, the French had occupied Lucca, and Florence was expecting now to fall into their hands. I lost no time in preparing for any crisis that might take place. I had, the year before, brought my Misogallo down to the occupation of Rome, which seemed to me the most brilliant of all the French conquests! To save this work I esteemed so valuable,\* I had ten copies of it translated and scattered in different places, that it might neither be suppressed nor lost, and in due time appear. I had never concealed my odium or contempt for these unmannerly slaves, and I expected from them all kinds of violence and insolence; so I prepared to shun it in the only manner possible. As long as I was unprovoked, I would hold my peace—assailed in any manner whatever, I would give sign of life and liberty. I prepared everything for living uncontaminated, free, and respected; or die, if I must, vindicated. The reason which induced me to write my own life, viz. that it might not be written worse by some one else, induced me also to make my own tomb-stones, and those of my lady's.

Thus prepared for fame, or at least something better than infamy, I wished also to prepare my works, filing them down,

---

\* Singular instance of the power of prejudice over the mind of an author! This Misogallo Alfieri esteemed so valuable, was nothing more than a miserable collection of pieces he had written to gratify his hatred of the French—it was the recipient of his anti-Gallic gall. As a history, or a composition, it is esteemed absolutely worthless; and yet it cost him more labor than half his tragedies; and he probably cared more for it! I have never seen an Italian who considered it worth reading.

copying them, and clearly drawing the line between those that were finished, and those that were not; and fixing the proper termination to them which my age and my resolution demanded.

I resolved, in accomplishing my fiftieth year, to seal up for ever the too abundant fountain of my fastidious rhymes, and I made an expurgated little volume of seventy Sonnets, capitolo one, and thirty-nine Epigrams, to be united to the first portion printed at Kehl; and then I gave back my lyre to Him who had given it to me, with a single ode in the measure of Pindar, which, to play the Greek, I entitled *Teleutodia*.<sup>x</sup> With that piece, I shut up shop for ever; and if I have since written Sonnets or Epigrams, I have kept no copy of them, and would not recognize them as my own. It is necessary to make an end and finish in time—and finish of one's own accord, without waiting till one is compelled to. The occasion of ten expired lustri (viz. 50 years), those merciless antilyrical dictators could not have been more convenient and appropriate. I seized it and flung aside the lyre for ever.

In respect of my translations, I had copied and corrected my Virgil during the two preceding years, and laid it aside, but not as a finished work. I had done the same with Sallust—but not so with Terence; I had gone over it but once; never revised or copied it, nor have I done so yet. It gave me pain to think of burning my four Translations from the Greek, and I could not consider them finished; but at all hazards—time or not, I was determined to copy both the text and the translation of Alceste. I resolved to give a true translation from the Greek, which should not be recognized as a translation. The other three had been translated directly from the text, and would consequently cost me less time and study in their correction. L'Abel now destined to stand (I will not say unique, but) alone, without its conceived, but never executed companions, I had copied and corrected, and I thought I could leave it as it was. I had also added to my works a short political writing in prose, entitled, *Ammonimento alle Potenze Italiane* (Advice to Italian Powers). This I had also copied

x The last ode

and corrected, and I left it finished. Not that I had the stupid vanity of playing off the Statesman (this is not my trade), but that writing had sprung from a just indignation I felt in contemplating politics certainly worse than my own; in the impotence of the Emperor, and the weakness of Italy. And last of all my Satires, a work which I had been slowly bringing to perfection: they were neatly copied, as they now remain (17) a number I have firmly resolved never to increase.

Having thus prepared my writings, I enamelled my heart and waited for coming events. That my manner of life, if I should continue to live, might be appropriate to my years and my designs, I adopted a regular system of study I have closely adhered to, and which I shall maintain as long as I have life to follow it.

The first three hours after rising on Monday and Tuesday I devoted to the study of the holy Scriptures, a book I felt deeply ashamed of not understanding thoroughly, of not having read constantly during my whole life; Wednesday and Thursday, Homer, the best fountain after the Bible; Friday, Saturday and Sunday to Pindar (as the most difficult and rugged of all the Greeks, and all the lyric poets, not excepting even Job, or the Prophets) for one year, and afterwards successively to Aristophanes, Theocritus, and other poetical and prose writers, to see if I could master the language as I had the Latin. This method, which I found of great service to me, I describe minutely for the benefit of those who come after me. I first read the Bible in Greek, the version of the LXX in the Vatican text; then I compared it with the Alexandrian text; I then read the same chapters (two or three) in Diodati, which is faithful to the Hebrew text; I afterwards read our Latin Vulgate, and last of all our faithful interlined Latin from the Hebrew text; and becoming for many years in this manner familiar with the alphabet, I got so I could read the words of the Hebrew, and catch the sounds which are generally most unpleasant, totally foreign to us, and mixed up with the sublime and the barbarous.

I read Homer aloud, translating into Latin without stopping till I had gone over my 60 or 80, or at most 100 lines



fixed for the morning. After managing the lines in this style I read aloud the Greek prosodically. I then read the Greek Scholiast with the Latin notes of Barnes, Clarke and Ernesti. Last of all I took up the literal Latin translation and read it once more, casting an eye upon the column of Greek to see where, and how, and why I had blundered, inscribing on the margin of my Greek text those elucidations the commentator had neglected. In these notes which I made in Greek I availed myself to a great extent of Hesychius, Favorinus, &c. Then in a column of paper by itself I noticed all uncommon words, modes, or figures also in Greek. Then I read all the comments of Eustathius—the same lines, so that they and their interpretations, and figures, passed under my eyes fifty times. This method will appear hard, but I was hard too, and the scalp of fifty years has need of quite a different chisel than at the age of twenty.

I had made of Pindar a study during the preceding years still more laborious. I have a Pindar in which there is not a single word over which there is not an arithmetical number to indicate from one to forty, or more—the position every word arranged according to its sense would occupy in those eternal labyrinth periods. But this did not satisfy me. I then took up another Pindar in Greek, a very ancient edition, incorrect, and badly punctuated (Daurigi's of Rome, the first who wrote comments on this author), and then treated it as I had Homer. I placed marginal notes in Greek to explain the author (i. e.), the thought divested of figure. In the same manner I went through Æschylus and Sophocles, and yet, with all these toils and mad applications my memory had become so enfeebled many years before, that I confess I knew little of the Greek, and fell into the grossest blunders on the first readings. But the study has become so dear, and so necessary to me, that from the year '96 I have on no account neglected it, or broken in upon these three hours after first rising in the morning, and whenever I have composed anything of my own, as *Alceste*, *Satires* and *Rhymes*, or *Translations*, I have done the work in my leisure hours, so that I have assigned to myself the refuse time rather than the first fruits of the day, and

where I have been obliged to give up my own writings, or my Greek, I had no hesitation in leaving the former.

I had reduced my life to this system. I boxed up my books and sent them to a villa out of Florence, that I need not be robbed of them a second time. And now this so long anticipated and abhorred invasion of Florence by the French took place the 25th of March, 1799. That same day, a few hours before they entered, my lady and self went to a villa out of the gate of St. Gallo, near to Montughi, having already emptied the house we lived in at Florence of everything, and abandoned it a prey to these tyrannical military lodgers.

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

OCCUPATIONS AT THE VILLA—EXIT OF THE FRENCH—OUR RETURN TO FLORENCE—LETTER OF C\*\*\*—MY PAIN IN HEARING A REPRINT WAS PREPARING AT PARIS OF MY WORKS PRINTED AT KEHL, BUT NEVER PUBLISHED.

IN our retirement and seclusion at the villa with few domestics, we devoted ourselves indefatigably to Letters. The Countess was familiar with the languages, and the literatures of England and Germany, Italy and France. She had gathered the spirit of ancient literature through these four languages, and I could hold converse with her in all my studies; my heart and intellect experienced the same sweet satisfaction from her society, and I never thought myself more happy than while I lived with her entirely alone, removed from so many human disasters. Thus we lived at our villa. Few of our Florentine acquaintances ever came to visit us, through fear of exciting the suspicion of that military pettifogging despotism, which of all the compounded political systems on earth is the most monstrous, laughable, deplorable and intolerable.

After reaching the villa I took up the two *Alcestes*, and filed mine down once more, but without infringing upon my hours of morning study. I was consequently so warmly absorbed

that I had little time left to think of our sorrows and dangers. These were not few, nor did I dissemble them, or flatter myself they did not exist: every day I was aware what was going on, and I contemplated affairs with deep solicitude—but having to fear for two, I plucked up courage and went on working. Every day, according to the custom of this Government, people were arbitrarily arrested—and always in the night. In this manner, under the title of hostages, many of the first youth of the city had been arrested, taken in bed at night from the embrace of their young wives, sent to Leghorn like slaves, and embarked any way for the Island of St. Margarita. Although I was a foreigner I feared this, and even more, as I was undoubtedly known to be their despiser and enemy. Every night might be the one in which they would come to seize me. I had prepared things as well as I could, that I might not be surprised or maltreated. At the very same time they proclaimed in Florence the same liberty they had in France, and all the most vile and criminal slaves triumphed. In the mean time I versified, Greekified and cheered my lady. This unhappy state of things lasted from the 27th of March, when they entered, till the 5th of July, when being whipped and beaten throughout all Lombardy, they made off with themselves from Florence at a very early hour in the morning, after having, as will be well understood, of course, carried off everything they could. Neither I nor my lady during this whole time set our feet in Florence, or contaminated our eyes by the sight of a single Frenchman. But the jubilee in Florence that morning of the evacuation, and several days after, when two hundred Austrian hussars entered the city, words cannot describe.

Accustomed to the repose of the villa, we wished still to remain another month before returning to Florence, and removing our furniture and books. We returned to the city, but the change that had taken place did not, in the least degree, interrupt my system of study, and I even continued it with greater ardor and hope, since for the rest of the year '99, the French being entirely undone, some hope arose for the prosperity of Italy, and I indulged for myself a hope of still having time to complete all my unfinished works. During the year, I re-

ceived after the battle of Novi, a letter from the Marquis C \* \* \*, my nephew, who had married a daughter of my sister, who, although unknown to me personally, was not unknown to fame, as he had been an excellent officer, and distinguished himself for more than five years, in the service of the King of Sardinia his natural sovereign. He wrote me after being severely wounded and made prisoner, having then passed into the service of the French after the *deportazione* of the King of Sardinia out of his states, which took place in January of the year '99. In thinking upon the error of this man, otherwise so estimable, and then briefly examining myself, what I should have been had I been born poor, low, or vicious, and found myself in these times—let the real truth be spoken—what I should have been I dare not say. But perhaps my pride would have saved me. And I would here say incidentally in passing, what has escaped me hitherto, that before the invasion of the French I had seen at Florence, the King of Sardinia, and gone to pay him my reverence, as I recognized it my duty to do, since he was once my sovereign; and was, besides, at this time, an unfortunate man. He gave me a kind reception, and the sight affected me exceedingly. I felt that day what I never had felt before, some desire to serve him, now he was abandoned by fortune, and the few who still stood by him were so destitute of wisdom—and I should have offered him my services if I had thought I could have done him any good, but I had no ability for such matters; and, besides, it was now too late. He went to the Island of Sardinia—things changed, and he afterwards returned and remained for many months at Florence, at the Poggio Imperiale—the Austrians then holding Tuscany, in the name of the Grand-Duke. But even then he had bad advisers, and accomplished nothing he ought to have done or might have done for his own good, and that of Piedmont. Again things became worse, and in these reverses he found himself entirely overwhelmed.

I saw him, however, again on his return from Sardinia, and perceiving he was in better hopes, I felt much less regret at not being able to render him any service.

These victories of the *Defenders of order and propriety* had



scarcely left me free to feel some peace and satisfaction, than I was forced to experience a most bitter but not unexpected trial. A prospectus of Molini, Italian bookseller, in Paris, fell into my hands, in which he gave notice of having undertaken a reprint of all my works (philosophical, both in prose and verse, so read the prospectus), of which he gave a list—all my works, even those printed in Kehl, as I said, but never published, I here found enumerated. This was a thunderbolt which smote me down for many days; not that I had ever flattered myself that the bales of the entire edition of the four publications, *Rhymes*, *Etruria*, *Tirannide*, and *Principe*, had not been robbed by the fellows who had stolen the rest of my goods left in Paris, but so many years had already passed, I hoped still for delay.

In 1793, when at Florence, I saw my books were hopelessly lost, I published a notice in all the Gazettes of Italy, saying that all my books and papers, having been seized, confiscated and sold, I should recognize none as my own wherever they might appear, except such as had been published by myself. The rest either had been altered, or others substituted for them, and at all events surreptitiously obtained, and I would not admit them as my own. Now, in '99, getting hold of this manifest of Molini, which promised, in the next year, a reprint of all these works, the most efficacious means of defending myself in the eyes of the good and estimable, would have been to publish a counter-manifest, and acknowledge the books as my own—tell how they have been stolen, and to publish the *Misogallo*, in total extenuation of my thoughts and feelings, and this book would, without doubt, have had that effect. But I was not free, nor am I now, for I live in Italy, and love and fear for others as well as for myself. So I did not do what I would have done in other circumstances, to free myself once and for ever, from the infamous gang of slaves now living, who cannot purify themselves, and are, therefore, pleased to dirty other people, pretending to esteem and rank them with themselves. And I, because I have spoken of liberty, am one of them, and they gladly class themselves with me, but I will hereafter fully destroy that false union by my *Misogallo*, even in the



eyes of the malignant and the stupid, who are the only ones who can confound us together, but unfortunately these two categories make up two thirds and a half of the world. Not being able then to do this which I knew how to, and could have done, I only did that little which I could for the time. I republished in all the Italian Gazettes, my notice of '93, with a postscript that I had heard an edition of works in prose and verse was being published under my name, at Paris, and I renewed the protest I had made six years before. In regard to the six packages I had left in Paris, containing over five hundred copies of each of the four works, viz. *Rime*, *Etruria*, *Tirannide*, and *Principe*, I can form no conjecture what has become of them. If they had been found and opened, they would be circulated and sold rather than reprinted, being such beautiful editions, in the paper, the type, and the printing. Their not having come to light, leads me to believe they have been buried in some one of those book-sepulchres, where so many lost but untouched things remain to rot in Paris; and that they have never been opened, for I wrote upon the bales, *Italian Tragedies*. However it may be, I have suffered the double misfortune of losing my money and labor, and of acquiring (I will not say the infamy but) the disapprobation and the taint of playing the chorister to those thieves in seeing my books published by means of the types of others.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

SECOND INVASION—TEDIOUS SYCOPHANCY OF THE LITERARY GENERAL—A PEACE NEGOTIATED WHICH SOMEWHAT DIMINISHES MY DISTURBANCES—SIX COMEDIES IDIATED, AND ONE COMPLETED.

(1800.) IN the meantime, I was continually at work in perfecting my four Greek Translations and prosecuting with ardor my studies, begun too late, as time dragged itself along. The 15th day of October came, and unexpectedly, once more, dur-

ing the truce fixed by the Emperor, the French invaded Tuscany, which they recognized as held for the Grand-Duke, with whom they were at peace. We had now no warning, and could not fly to our villa, and we were obliged to see and hear these Frenchmen; but it will be understood, of course, only in the streets, for we had nothing to do with them. The *Comune* of Florence finally decided that as I was a foreigner, and had a very small house, I should be exempt from the odious and oppressive billeting of soldiers. Being delivered from this apprehension, which troubled me more than anything else, I resigned myself to whatever might take place. I shut myself up in the house, and except the two hours' walk I never dispense with, which I took every morning, in secluded spots, entirely alone, I never showed myself; and I continued my literary labors with the utmost intensity.

But if I wished to escape from these fellows they did not wish to avoid me, and to my misfortune, their Commander General in Florence, who had a smattering of literature, determined to become acquainted with me, and very politely called on me once or twice, but without finding me at home—a standing arrangement I had made, and one, too, I intended should last. Neither would I banter compliment for compliment by returning cards. Some days after he sent a verbal message to me to know at what hour I could be found at home. Seeing his stubbornness on the increase, and not wishing to commit a verbal answer to a *domestique de place* who might blunder or alter it, I wrote upon a slip of paper, that Vittorio Alfieri, in order to avoid any mistake that might be made in delivering his reply at the hands of the servant of the General, gave a written answer, “that if the General in his quality of Commandant of Florence, wished an interview, an appointment would be made instantly, in order not to offer any resistance to the reigning power, whatever that power might be, but if the wish arose from mere curiosity of the individual, Vittorio Alfieri, being by nature much of a recluse, no longer sought for acquaintance with any person whatever, and he would, therefore, pray to be excused.” The General immediately replied in two words, that this desire of forming my

acquaintance had arisen from reading my works, but discovering that my disposition was retiring, he would not seek to interrupt my solitude. And so the matter ended, I being liberated from the most odious and disagreeable bore which could possibly have been inflicted upon me.

In the meanwhile my own Piedmont (once) had been democraticized, and its masters monkeyfied everything their own way. They changed the Academy of the Sciences called Royal, into a National-Institute after the style of that of Paris, where Belles-lettres and Artists had place. It pleased some of them (I don't know whom, since my friend Caluso was dismissed from the Secretaryship of the old Academy), to nominate me to the Institute, and give me a part in it by direct letter. Being forewarned of it by the Abbé, I returned their letter unopened, and through the same friend told them I must decline the honor, that I wished no connexions with any association of the kind, and much less one which had recently excluded with such impudent animosity, three so worthy persons as Cardinal Gerdil, Count Balbo, and Cavalier Morrozo, assigning no other reason for their exclusion than that they were not sufficiently democratic. I have never been a royalist, nor am I now, but it does not follow that I wish to mix myself up with such a set. My Republic is not theirs, and I am, and always will profess myself in every respect, what they are not. And here, although full of indignation for this affront received, I perjured myself again, writing fourteen verses upon the fact, and sent them to my friend, but I retained no copy of them, or of any others that escaped from my pen through indignation or any other feeling, nor will I ever after register them among my rhymes. I had not thus the power to resist in September of the previous year a new, or rather renewed strong natural impulse which I felt for many days, and which finally overcame me. I idiated in writing, six Comedies, I may say at a single heat. I had always determined to make a trial in this last species of writing, and had fixed upon the number of twelve. But mischances, trials of spirit, and more than all, the exhausting, constant study of a language, so immeasurably vast as the Greek, had estranged and enfeebled

my brain, and I now thought it impossible to conceive anything. But I cannot tell how in the saddest moment of slavery and without probability, or hope of success, or having any longer time or means to execute, I felt the creating fire once more kindled. The first four comedies I sketched all at once during a walk, and on my return made my usual sketch.

The day after revolving it over in my fancy, I wished to see if I could write one at least in another style for a specimen. I sketched two others, one of which was of a kind, perhaps new for Italy, but different from the four, but the sixth was nothing more than the mere Italian comedy, a picture of Italian manners as they now are—this I wrote to avoid the imputation of not knowing how to paint them. But he who, just because manners change, would put an end to the comedy, ought to deride and revolutionize the nature of man, but not man in Italy any more than man in France, or Persia—not man of 1800 any more than man of 1500, or 2000, if the salt of the comedy and the author do not perish with those men and those manners. It was my object in these six pieces to give three different kinds of comedy. The first four suited to all times, places, and customs—the fifth fanciful, poetical, and also susceptible of extensive application—the sixth in the modern school in which all comedies are now written, and of which one may make a dozen with a single dip of his brush in the fifth, which daily falls under his eyes—they are full of trivialties, administer it seems to me little delight, and not the slightest utility. Our age, sparing in invention, has tried to fish out tragedy from comedy, to make the polite drama; this is what one would call the *Epoëa of the frogs*. I, on the contrary, who never court but the truth, have, with greater propriety it seems to me, cut out comedy from tragedy, which seems to me more useful, more diverting, and more faithful to truth, since we not unfrequently see the great and the powerful who excite our ridicule, but among the middle classes, as bankers, lawyers, we never see those who excite our wonder, and the buskin is poorly adapted to dirty feet. But however this may be, I have made a trial—time and myself will decide if my trial shall pass muster or be burned.



## CHAPTER XXX.

THE PROSE OF THE SIX COMEDIES EXTENDED A YEAR AFTER THEY WERE IDIATED—AFTER ONE YEAR MORE VERSIFIED—LABORS ATTENDED WITH SERIOUS LOSS OF HEALTH—ONE MORE MEETING WITH THE ABBE OF CALUSO IN FLORENCE.

(1801.) THUS passed the long year 1800, the second half of which had proved so fatal and terrible to all noble men. In the first months of 1801 (the allied powers having as yet committed nothing but blunders) that peace succeeded which still lasts, and holds all Europe in arms and fear. But as for myself I had so deeply felt these public Italian disasters that I became almost insensible to everything but the termination of my already too long and crowded literary career. So at the close of July I prepared myself vigorously to expend my last powers in extending the six comedies.

At a single effort, as I had idiated them I sat down to extend them without intermission, working upon each other about six days, but such was the excitement and the tension of my brain I could not finish the fifth, and was seized with an inflammation of the head, and an attack of gout in my breast which terminated in spitting blood. I was now obliged to abandon my dear labors. My illness was short but violent, and left me a long recovery. I could not take up my other two comedies till the close of September, but they were extended in the early part of October. I now felt liberated from the strokes of this hammer, which had so long been falling on my brain. At the close of this year I received the sad news from Turin of the death of my only nephew (son of my sister), the Count of Cumiana, hardly thirty years old, after an illness of three days—he left neither wife nor children. This was a severe affliction to me, although I had scarcely ever seen the young man. But I entered into the grief of his mother (his father had died two years before), and I confess it pained me not a little to see all I had given my sister pass into the hands of strangers. The

heirs of my sister and brother-in-law will be three daughters, all of whom are married—one as I said to Calli, of Alexandria, one with a Ferrari, of Genoa, and the other with the Count of Callano, of Aosta. This weakness, which can be concealed but never eradicated from the heart of a man of distinguished birth, of wishing his name, or at least his family, to live, was still alive in my breast, and it cut me deeper than I could have believed—so necessary to a perfect knowledge of ourselves is living experience in the very circumstances themselves, before we can tell what we are.

This orphanage of my nephew induced me to make some friendly arrangement with my sister to secure the payment of my pension in Piedmont, in case (which I did not believe) I might outlive her, in order that I need not find myself at the arbitration of these nieces and their husbands whom I did not know.

But in the meantime this *quondam* peace had secured a *quondam* repose to Italy—the French despotism had annulled paper money in Piedmont and Rome, and returning from paper to gold, my lady and myself, she from Rome and I from Piedmont, had drawn funds which immediately delivered us from all apprehension, which we had felt for our interests for more than five years, while they were diminishing more and more every day. So at the close of 1801, we bought four horses, a luxury we had long been deprived of. But years, public misfortunes, so many examples of a lot harder than our own, had moderated my desires, and these four horses were now even too many for one who was for many years scarcely contented with ten or fifteen.

And now, fully cloyed and undeceived with things of the world, prudent in my manner of life, always dressed in black, spending nothing but in books, I found myself quite rich, but I am very proud I shall die at least not half as rich as I was born. But why not accept the offer my nephew C—— made me through my sister, to settle in Paris (where he resided), to recover from the confiscation in France of my income, my books, and the rest of my goods, and enjoy them once more? Because I will make no concession to the thieves, and from a

contemptible tyranny in which justice is grace, I wish neither one nor the other. So I have never even answered C.'s letter on the subject, as I never answered his second letter, in which he pretended not to have received my answer to his first, and to tell the truth, as he was bent upon being a French General, he was obliged to wear a false face about my only reply, and in the same manner, I being bent upon living and dying a free Italian, I was obliged to treat every letter and offer he made me, or in whatever manner he did it, in precisely the same way.

(1802.) As soon as the summer of 1802 came on (as like the grasshoppers it is my time to sing) I immediately began to versify my six comedies, and I felt the same ardor and enthusiasm now as when I idiated and extended them. This year I also experienced, but in a different manner, the sad effects of frequent toil, since, as I have before said, all these compositions were written in hours stolen from my walks and leisure, for I determined nothing should ever break in upon my regular system of morning study. After versifying two comedies and a half in the heat of August, I was seized by the usual inflammation of the head, and swarms of boils in every part of my body, of which I should have made a mere joke, had not one, the king of all, nested himself in my foot, between the external ankle bone and the cord, which held me in my bed more than fifteen days, attended with painful spasms and St. Anthony's fire following as a consequence. More terrible suffering I never experienced in my life. I was obliged then, this year too, to throw aside my comedies and suffer in bed. And now I experienced a double suffering, for it so happened that the same September my dear Caluso, who had for many years promised me a visit, was able to redeem his pledge, but he could only stay a month, since he had come to take away his elder brother, who had about two years before retired to Pisa to escape the slavery of *Frenchified* Turin. But during that year a law of that *same Liberty* constrained all the Piedmontese to retire to their cage by such a day in September, on pain of the usual confiscation and expulsion from the most happy states of that incredible Republic! So the good Abbé

had come to Florence, and by fatality found me in bed, as he had left me in Alsace fifteen years before. We had never seen each other afterwards, and this meeting was most sweet and grateful to me after so long a separation, particularly as I could not leave my bed, or move about, or occupy myself in anything. I gave him to read my translations from the Greek, the Satires, Terence, and Virgil, and in fact everything I had written except the comedies which I have not yet read or named to a living soul, nor will I till I see them well finished. My friend seemed to be on the whole satisfied with my labors, and he gave me verbally and also wrote me out some kind and luminous notes upon the translation from the Greek, of which I have made use, and shall continue to till I touch them no more. But after twenty-seven days this sweet light was extinguished, and I was left with my pains and my disease, which I could never have tolerated had not my incomparable companion consoled me for every privation. I recovered in October, and resumed the versification of the comedies immediately, and before the 8th of October they were done. I have now only to give them their last finishing stroke.

---

## CHAPTER XXXI.

MY INTENTIONS IN REGARD TO THIS SECOND COLLECTION OF INEDITED WORKS—WEARIED AND EXHAUSTED I MAKE AN END OF EVERY NEW ENTERPRISE—AIM RATHER TO UNDO THAN TO DO—MAKE MY EXIT VOLUNTARILY FROM THE FOURTH EPOCH (OF MANHOOD), AND AT THE AGE OF 54 YEARS AND A HALF GIVE MYSELF UP FOR AN OLD MAN AFTER TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS OF ALMOST CONTINUAL INVENTION, VERSIFICATION, TRANSLATION, AND STUDY—CHILDISHLY PROUD OF HAVING NEARLY OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTY OF THE GREEK, I INVENT THE ORDER OF HOMER AND CREATE MYSELF *αυτοχτισ* CAVALIERO.

(1803.) Here I am then, if I do not mistake, at the end of these long and tedious chatterings. But well or badly done,



all these things above referred to, I was obliged to tell. If, therefore, I have been too minute in relating them, it is because I have been too profuse in doing them. And now the two before mentioned maladies of those last two years admonish me it is time to make an end of my works and their rehearsal. So I here bring the fourth epoch to a close, being very certain I have no longer the will, nor perhaps the power of creating anything more. My design is to go on filing down both my writings and my translations during the five years and some months that are yet left of the sixty years, if God wills I should reach that point. If I live beyond it other years, I not only propose, but command myself to do nothing at all, except to continue my studies, which I shall do while I have life. And if I again take up my works, it will only be to undo or remake (in respect of elegance), but never to add an iota. The only golden treatise on old age (by Cicero) I will translate after sixty years—a work adapted to that age, and I will dedicate it to my indivisible companion with whom I have now shared all the good, and all the evil of this life, for more than thirty-five years, and with whom I will share them for ever.

As to printing all these things which I find or shall find done at sixty years, I now think I shall never do it, for the fatigue is too great, as I must do it under a tyrannical government; and I should have too much to endure from the Censors, and this I will no more submit to. I will then leave manuscripts as neat and correct as I can of those works I wish to leave, esteeming them worthy to see the light; the rest I will burn. So I shall do with this life, reducing it down to a finished state, or burning it. But to finish now cheerfully these serious tales, and show to the reader that I have taken the first steps into the childhood of the Fifth Epoch, I will make him smile once more by confessing the last weakness of the present year, 1803. After finishing the versification of my comedies, esteeming them safely finished, I have been growing more and more confirmed in the idea of becoming quite a personage with posterity! After pursuing the study of Greek with such resolution as to have become, or at least esteem myself in some manner master at first sight of Pindar and the Tragic Poets, and more

than all, the divine Homer in literal Latin Translation, and in sensible Italian, I feel some pride in reporting such a victory between the age of forty-seven and fifty-four. So it came into my head, that as every work merits its reward, I must reward myself, and this reward ought to be a decoration, an honor, and not filthy lucre, so I invented a necklace with the names of twenty-three poets ancient and modern engraved on it, with a pendent in Cameo, representing Homer, and on the back of it (now laugh, reader), a Greek distich of my own, which I will here put in my last note translated in Italian. I showed them both before-hand to my friend Caluso—the Greek to see there was no barbarism, solecism, or error of prosody in it—and the Italian to see if I had tempered in the vulgar tongue the excessive impertinence of the Greek, for it is known that in a language little understood, an author can speak more vauntingly of himself. He approved of both, and I register them here that they may not be lost.\* I will have the necklace itself made immediately, and will make it as rich as possible in jewelry, gold, and precious stones. And when this new order shall be strung, whether it is worthy of me or not, it will at all events be an invention entirely my own, and if I am unworthy of it, an impartial posterity will award it to him who has merited it better. May we meet again, my reader if, indeed, we do not part for ever, when I, old and silly, shall talk even worse nonsense than I have done in this last chapter of my expiring manhood.

VITTORIO ALFIERI.

Florence, 14th May, 1803.

---

\* *Αυτον, ποιησας, Αλφειριος, ιππε, Ομηρου  
Κοιρανικης, τιμην ηλφανε θειοτεραν.*

Forse inventava Alfieri un Ordin vero  
Nel farsi ei stesso Cavalier di Omero.

## LETTER

OF THE ABBE DI CALUSO, HERE ADDED TO COMPLETE THE WORK,  
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR.

TO THE MOST NOBLE COUNTESS OF ALBANY:—

Signora,—In acknowledging the favor extended to me of allowing me to read the papers in which our incomparable friend has written his own life, I will declare my opinion, and I will do so in writing, for I shall in this manner say more in fewer words. Knowing the genius and the soul of that unique man, I was exceedingly anxious to see if he had in some way entirely his own, conquered the difficulty almost insuperable of speaking for a long time of oneself without either tiresome follies or false coloring, but he has surpassed all my hopes by his amiable sincerity and sublime simplicity. The naturalness of his almost careless style is delightful; the image he has left of himself, sculptured, colored, living, is wonderfully striking and faithful. He is there seen just as he was, lofty, strange, and extreme, not only in his natural characteristics, but in every work that did not seem to him unworthy of his generous affections. And where he went too far, it is easy to perceive his excesses always flowed from some praiseworthy sentiment, as the praise I perceive he bestows upon me sprang from his friendship.

However, to the many motives we have to grieve that death has robbed us of him so soon, we must add too that this Life, with many other of his writings he has left, still needed the revisions of his pen which it would not have lacked had he reached his 60th year, in which he proposed to take it again in hand, and reduce it to a finished state or burn it. But he certainly would not have burned it, as we have not the heart to do now, for we have his breathing picture, and so many facts and particulars in this sure and unique document.

I therefore praise your discretion, Signora Countess, in guarding so jealously these invaluable leaves, and showing them only to some prudent and friendly individual who will

only draw from them the appropriate notices to weave the history of that great man—a history which I dare not undertake, and it grieves me exceedingly, but we cannot all do everything, and I ought to narrow myself down here to the simple statement of those circumstances which seem necessary for the completion, and the apology of the narrative left imperfect by our friend. The last lines were written the 14th of May, 1803. I will close the account with the facts you have furnished me, Signera Countess, for you must have had but too vivid a memory for everything that concerned him, not only for what you saw and heard, but for what remains in your mind and heart.

At that time Count Alfieri was occupied in perfecting his six comedies, and for pastime and pleasantry, sometimes thinking of the design, the mottos and the execution of the necklace which he took the fancy to make for the Cavalier of Homer. In April, as was the case in the changes of the seasons, he had been seized with the gout more severely than usual in consequence of his physical strength and vigor being exhausted by intense study, and it settled in the extremities of his body. Hence, to repress, or at least weaken it, as he felt that for some years his digestion was becoming painful and morbid, he concluded the best thing he could do would be to diminish his food, which had even hitherto been most abstemious. He thought that the gout would thus be starved out, while a light stomach would give him a free and clear mind for intense application. It was in vain that the Countess admonished and affectionately implored him to increase his food, as his eyes which were every day sinking deeper in his head, and his body which was constantly wasting away, proclaimed the necessity for more nourishment. But he was firm in his excessive abstinence, and all through that summer persisted in working daily for several hours with the greatest intensity at his comedies, fearing his life would close before they were perfected, without, however, neglecting for a single day, his application to his numerous other books for the acquisition of a more exquisite learning.

Thus he went on destroying himself from day to day by an



application the more intense as he felt his strength give way, giving up everything but study, which was now the only solace of his wearied and painful life. On the third day of October, he rose with an appearance of better health and spirits than he had shown for a long time, and after his usual morning study took a drive in his phaeton. But he had only gone a short distance before he was seized with a severe chill, which he tried to drive off by the exercise of walking, which, however, was prevented by pains in his intestines. He returned home with a fever which continued violent several hours, but subsided at evening, and although in the beginning he had been disturbed by emetics, he passed the night rather quietly, and the next morning not only dressed himself, but left his room and went down to the dining-hall for dinner, but still that day he could eat nothing, slept most of the time, and passed a disturbed night. The morning of the 5th, after shaving, he wished to take the air, but the rain prevented him. At evening he took pleasantly his chocolate, as he was accustomed. But on the night of the 6th he was seized with excruciating pains in his intestines, and in compliance with the orders of the doctor, mustard poultices were applied to his feet, but as soon as they had begun to draw he tore them off, fearing they would injure his feet and prevent him from walking for several days. But the following evening he seemed to be better, without, however, leaving his bed, which he thought he could not bear. The next morning his attending physician called in a counsel which prescribed baths and blisters, but these the invalid would not allow for fear they would impede his walking. They gave him opiates, which alleviated his pains, and secured him a very tranquil night. But before the repose which the opium administered became perfect, he was disturbed by wild fancies like dreams in which the remembrance of all that was past seemed to come back vividly upon his imagination, and he recalled his studies and his labors for thirty years, and what seemed more astonishing, he repeated with perfect accuracy quite a number of Greek verses in the opening of Hesiod which he had never read but once, for he had so stated to the Countess who now sat by his bed. But

yet with all this it does not seem that the idea of death came into his mind, although for a long time he had imagined it so near, and it now waited for him but a short time. It is certain at least that he made no sign of it to the Countess, although she did not leave him till morning, when he took without knowing it was medicine, oil and magnesia, which would have been likely to pain him by the operation. About eight o'clock his danger became apparent, and the Countess was called. He was now troubled and almost suffocated by shortness of breath. Nevertheless, he was raised up in bed, a chair placed under it, and he was braced up. A little after the daylight faded away from him, he lost his sight and expired. Not thus were the charities and comforts of religion shut out from his soul, but as the end was not believed to be so near, nor any haste required, the Confessor who had been called arrived too late. But we cannot for this reason believe the Count was unprepared, for his thoughts and words had long and frequently been familiar with death.

Thus on the morning of Saturday, October 8th, 1803, he was taken from us, having passed not much over the half of his 56th year. He was buried where so many illustrious men repose, in Santa Croce, near the altar of the Holy Spirit, under a simple stone. Countess of Albany is now preparing for him a worthy mausoleum, to be erected not far from that of Michael Angelo. It is already in the hands of Canova, and the work of so great a sculptor must be great.

I would say more to show what a friend he was, and what a loss we and Italy have sustained. But pity wills I should suppress my tears, that I may not excite those more painful than my own. Let us rather dry them in the remembrance that in his writings his genius will be immortal, as will be the living image of that great man, which already shines so resplendent from his published works. So much the less ought we to grieve that to this life he did not put the finishing stroke—although the second part is only a first sketch, written with a trembling hand, and so many notes and erasures, that it is not easy to read, and make everything out clearly.

But there is no danger that on this account any unfavorable

opinion should be taken of the Count Alfieri's faculty of writing. But for this reason, as I have before hinted, I wished to add some apology, not only for the language, but the spirit of this work. In these papers Alfieri is pictured as he is—undivested of every blemish and defect—from them no idea can be gathered but the truth. But the asperity of his disdain may often offend many, which, if not perceived in any other of his works, should be sufficient, as I have said, in justifying the Countess in withholding these leaves from all, except some tried friend of the author. But since the reasons which would offend so many minds are already published in his other works, and the splendor of his fame is enough to arm him against all the gall of envy, we have little to fear. Still, as these papers, however guarded, may fall into less kind hands, it was well to guard this point here.

In distinguishing, then, the two degrees of praise—that of high, and that of faultless, in this miserable world the second is extremely rare, even in moderation, and the first is not demanded. Alfieri always aimed to excel, and among the noble feelings, to which the love of glory inspired this great heart, the love of two things was supreme—things he could never sunder—his own country, and civil liberty. True it is, that the philosopher who follows his own pursuits in a monarchy, is vastly more free than the monarch himself; nor have I ever desired any other liberty for myself, nor held in disdain the duties of a faithful subject. But when sovereigns assume the entire control of their subjects, it is quite natural some one should take it into his head, that civil liberty can no longer exist, where the right of willing exists only in one. Under this illusion Alfieri burned with the desire of seeing his country free, and extending from a part to the whole, he called Italy his country, and longed ardently for Italian liberty, which he would not despair of seeing one day rise gloriously from its ashes. However, as it seemed to him that nothing was so fatal to Italian freedom as the French power, he gave himself up to political hatred, which he believed could help Italy when it became universal. He wished also to sever himself entirely from those infamous men, who, while they pretended to be

the greatest champions of liberty, have perpetrated in its holy name the most abominable crimes that could blacken its memory. It is clear, to a candid mind, that he should not have spoken so generally, without distinction of the good and bad; nor does the hatred of any nation seem reasonable to the judgment of a cool philosopher. But we must judge of Alfieri as we do of a most passionate lover, who cannot be just towards the adversaries of his idol; as an Italian Demosthenes, who opposes only his words of fire to the haughty power of the Macedonians. Nor will I, on this account, exculpate him, nor is it necessary I should claim for him supreme praise. It is enough for me, that reasonable indulgence should not be denied to faults which spring from the excess of so noble a sentiment as love of one's own country.

I pray you, Signora Countess, to make whatever use you may think best of this letter, according to me, as your kindness always does, the merit, at least, of having tried to do well, and the humility with which I prize myself upon being your most devoted servant,

TOMMASO VALPERGA-CALUSO.

*Florence, June 21st, 1804.*

9.7.24

50m.

8









This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

taken from the Building

5161 8 1 190

4161 71 530

1917 2 2 23

UN 5 1920

0761 9 NOV

1920 JUN 2

FORM 410





